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WHAT THE PEOPLE SAY ABOUT NORMAN'S Electro-Curative Belts.

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TO A. NORMAN, M.E. :

PAUDASH, ONT.

DEAR SIR,—Please find enclosed 50 cents, for which I want a Teething Necklace. A good while ago I got your "Acme" set, as I was suffering from a Nervous Debility and Impotency, and I am now thankful to say it cured me; and the best evidence I can give is the above order, as I got married since and have now a big bouncing baby boy, which, for size and strength, no baby in Canada can beat, and before I sent for the Belts I had no hope of such a blessing, not even of marriage.

I remain, yours in gratitude,

G. W. D.

MR. A. NORMAN :

TORONTO, ONT.

DEAR SIR,—I have great pleasure in being able to testify to the efficacy of your Electric Belts. They have benefited me greatly. Before I got them I used to suffer with Catarrh in the head and General Debility. The Belts cleansed my blood, and cured my Catarrh; I scarcely ever catch cold now. I recommend them to all who suffer.

Yours truly,

N. McM.

A. NORMAN, Esq. :

199 YONGE STREET,

TORONTO, Dec. 6, 1887.

DEAR SIR,—Twelve months ago I had to leave my business through complete prostration, and by the advice of my physician I travelled and stayed at different country resorts. After four months, circumstances occurred which compelled me to return to my business. I hardly knew how to do so, as my head felt so bad with creeping sensations through it, and my thoughts I could not concentrate for two minutes together; also I could not rest at night owing to dreams and sweats. In this condition I consulted you, and you told me if I carried out the course you recommended, I would get relief in a few days. I was doubtful, but I tried it, and I must own in two days I felt like a new man, since which time I have rested more and worked less, and to-day I am in better health than I have been for years past.

Yours respectfully,

ALIVE BOLLARD.

## NORMAN'S Electro-Curative Belt Institution,

ESTABLISHED 1874

4 Queen Street East, Toronto.

N.B.—BATHS OF ALL KINDS.

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# —THE— YATISI CORSET

Recommended by the **HIGHEST MEDICAL AUTHORITY.**

Is modeled from a design of one of the most celebrated Parisian makers. It gives the wearer that ease and grace so much admired in French ladies.

The Yatisi Corset, owing to the peculiar diagonal elasticity of the cloth, will fit the wearer perfectly the first time worn, no matter what her style of form is—either long or short waisted. To ladies who wish to lace tight and not feel uncomfortable at the bust or hips they are indispensable.



The Yatisi Corset does not stretch at the waist, requires no breaking in, fits comfortably the first time worn. As it gives to every motion of the wearer, it will outlast any of the old-style rigid corsets.

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Every merchant who sells the Yatisi Corset will guarantee every claim made by the manufacturers, and refund the money to any lady who is not perfectly satisfied with the corset.

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Every pair of Yatisi Corsets is stamped with our name, without which none is genuine.

**MANUFACTURED ONLY BY**

## The Crompton Corset Co.

# LANDING A PRIZE.

A Novel.

BY

MRS. EDWARD KENNARD,

AUTHOR OF

"A CRACK COUNTY," "A GLORIOUS GALLOP," "THE GIRL IN  
THE BROWN HABIT," "KILLED IN THE OPEN," ETC., ETC.



TORONTO:

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of the Minister of Agriculture by the NATIONAL PUBLISHING COMPANY,  
Toronto, in the year one thousand eight hundred and eighty-nine.

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Dedication.

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TO MY BROTHER-IN-LAW

C. C. MACRAE,

IN MEMORY OF THE PLEASANT DAYS SPENT  
IN NORWAY.

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# LANDING A PRIZE.



## CHAPTER I.

### RESPECTABLE BOREDOM.

NUMBER 115, Bryanston Square, was an eminently respectable establishment. With one exception, all its inmates were staid, sedate and middle-aged.

It belonged to a well-to-do gentleman, Bousfield by name, who had occupied it for a great number of years.

Mr. Bousfield was a bachelor, and had arrived at the somewhat mature age of sixty-five without having ventured into the toils or pleasures of matrimony. In early youth, his extreme shyness had prevented him from mixing much with the fair sex, or deriving any very great enjoyment from their society. Later on, however, came a desperate love-affair, which set flame to his virgin heart with a vengeance. He adored a fair-haired, blue-eyed deceiver, who, after promising to be his wife, eloped with a dashing Guard'sman, exactly a week before the time appointed for the wedding to take place.

This behaviour disgusted Mr. Bousfield with womenkind. He never would look at another woman all his days, and, although he admitted that there were a few good ones about, he declined to run the risk of putting in to a lottery, where prizes, in his estimation, were decidedly the exception.

His father died when he was comparatively a young man, and at the age of eight-and-twenty Mr. Bousfield found himself possessed of an income not far short of six thousand a year. One of his first acts was to purchase the house in Bryanston Square, in which he had ever since continued to reside.

He was a man of simple tastes, and for sport he cared nothing whatever. He saw no pleasure in galloping after a little red fox, and breaking one's bones ; or in dangling a fly to coax salmon that never rose, or even in bringing down a real good

rocketer. They had no fascination for him. Indeed, he went further, and almost pitied those for whom they offered an attraction. But he thoroughly enjoyed a game of whist, and his love for that pastime was all the more remarkable, because, in spite of the practice he had had, he was a very indifferent player, and invariably got sworn at, for ignoring his partner's lead.

Every afternoon, his stout, comfortable figure might have been seen wending its way down Bond Street, on the road to the club. Mr. Bousfield would not have considered the day complete without his pre-prandial rubber.

Everything at Number 115 went on by clock-work, as it were.

Each morning at half-past nine, punctually to a minute, the grey-haired butler sounded the gong for breakfast. At two o'clock he thumped it for luncheon, at half-past seven for dinner. His duties were performed with the precision of an automaton. What he did one day, that he did the next. Every action was methodical and regular. He had a certain hour for laying the cloth, another for taking it away, one for bringing in the coal-scuttle, another for removing it. In short, an excellent servant who knew what he had to do, and who did it. But if the slightest extra call were made upon him, that entailed any deviation from the usual routine, then he lost his head completely, and collapsed into a state of hopeless muddle, pitiful to behold.

As with him, so with the cook, the housemaid, and the coachman.

They had been so many years in Mr. Bousfield's service, and had grown so accustomed to his ways, that nothing less than an earthquake or a miracle could have shaken them out of their own particular little narrow groove.

Mr. Bousfield had but one fault in the eyes of his domestics. He was neither a bad-tempered master, nor yet an arbitrary, or, worse still, a stingy one; but he was excessively precise, not to say fidgety. If he came downstairs of a morning and found a single chair out of its usual place, or a crease in the tablecloth, it made him quite miserable, and offended his eye in the most grievous manner. The culprit received a reprimand on the spot, and was requested to be more careful in future.

It is not exaggerating the case to say that Mr. Bousfield's love of order was remarkable. A pin, a bit of paper, or a piece of white thread on the floor, were to him like red rags to

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a bull. He was bound to go at them. Some impulse forced him to bend his by no means pliant back, and seize the pin with his fore-finger and thumb, and stick it in the little pocket-pincushion he always carried for the purpose; and to roll up the paper or thread into a neat ball, which he carefully deposited at the back of the grate.

Number 115 was not exactly what might be called a cheerful mansion. Its owner did not approve of innovations, and the modern style of decoration. His furniture was all solid, the dining-room mahogany, the drawing-room rosewood, upholstered in red damask. Heavy velvet hangings depended from the windows. There were no flowers or white curtains, no frills and ribbons and draperies to be seen. Everything was plain, severe, substantial, and dark to a degree. As might have been expected, the general effect was very gloomy. Respectable, no doubt, but then is it wise or even judicious to sacrifice grace, beauty, art, to an ugly and depressing respectability? Could not respectability be made attractive, and don brighter colours?

Such was the inward query of the only young creature in that dull, methodical household. He had lived three-and-twenty years in the world, and was full of suppressed wishes, vague longings, and desires that seemed never destined to be satisfied.

And the odd part was, all the other inmates of the house, saving only himself, appeared perfectly contented with the groove, which to him was so intolerably narrow, small and confining.

His uncle, Smith the butler, Mrs. Bridget the cook, all of them got up of a morning, ate their three hearty meals, went through the accustomed round day after day, and as far as he could judge, were quite happy. Why was not he happy too? What was wrong in his composition to make him so deadly tired of the same eternal routine? The *tête-à-tête* breakfasts, the good advice, the daily discussion of the newspaper and political arguments, followed by the hateful toddle down to the club, and the equally hateful one back again (for his uncle insisted on his playing whist, though he loathed it). And to crown all, the solemn dinners, and the awful three hours of double dummy that succeeded them, and which in themselves were enough to addle any few wits it had pleased the Almighty to bless him with.

It was stagnation, not life. He longed for the society of

his fellow-creatures, and to indulge in those amusements natural to youth.

Instead of which, almost ever since he could remember, he had been the sole companion of an elderly gentleman, possessing many excellent qualities, no doubt, and who was neither aggressively selfish, nor yet actively disagreeable, but who, nevertheless, was foolish enough to expect him, in all things, to have the same tastes, views and ideas as himself.

It was ridiculous, simply ridiculous, and ran counter to the laws by which human nature is governed. The bud is not the leaf. It must be allowed to imbibe the rain and the sun shine before it can expand and come to maturity.

The gulf between twenty-three and sixty-five was too great to be bridged over merely by word of command, and this fact his uncle either could not or would not realize.

What cared he, Harry Hopperton, about pins and bits of thread on the carpet? They were nothing to him. They did not throw *him* into a fever of agitation. On the contrary, the sight of them failed to make his heart beat one stroke the faster, and, as far as he was concerned, he would have let them lie there till Doomsday, or until the housemaid chose to brush them away.

And yet, because Mr. Bousfield always made a point of picking the wretched things up, he was expected to do likewise, and to have inherited the same remarkable love of order. But he had not inherited it; quite the reverse, and there were times when poor Harry felt a terrible hypocrite, and despised himself for the part he played. Yet he dared not offend Mr. Bousfield, or refuse to conform to his wishes.

The reason was simple enough. He was entirely dependent upon him.

He had not a farthing of his own, and might have starved long ago had it not been for his uncle's bounty. Mrs. Hopperton, Mr. Bousfield's only sister, lived to regret her imprudent, runaway marriage with Harry's father. He turned out a worthless spendthrift, with nothing but his good looks to recommend him, and soon ran through a fortune, which at best was only small. Bailiffs seized his belongings, and what was left of the wreck had to be given up to creditors. Then came want, discontent, misery, debt, and finally death.

Two years later Mrs. Hopperton died also, broken both in health and in spirits. She left behind her one only child—our hero—Harry, who had no means whatever of support.

At this juncture Mr. Bousfield came to the rescue. The old saying that "blood is thicker than water" held good.

Although at that period he was forty-two years of age and detested the very sight of anything noisy, destructive and juvenile, he did violence to his bachelor feelings, and introduced Harry, then a boy of seven, to the orderly establishment in Bryanston Square.

Here his nephew had ever since continued to reside, and the boy was educated and acknowledged as Mr. Bousfield's heir.

And though Harry hated the life he led, though he detested its dreary monotony, and the various restrictions laid upon him, it can easily be understood how many and excellent were the reasons which prevented him from rebelling too openly, or displeasing his uncle by any overt act of disobedience.

To do him justice he had concealed his sentiments so well that, up to the time when this story commences, the elder man had no suspicion of the glowing volcano that smouldered within his nephew's breast, and that daily, since he had reached years of discretion, threatened to break out into active flame. The forces were there at work, and none the less fierce because they were suppressed.

Perhaps Harry would have done better had he broken loose from the chains that bound him. It might have been a manlier and an honest part to defy Fate, and to seek to gain his own livelihood, regardless of consequences. But he could never quite summon up sufficient moral courage to strike out a new path. He was fond of his uncle after a fashion. He had no other living relative, and they clung together insensibly. Besides it is a very difficult thing—maybe, an unwise one—to sacrifice all one's prospects to a state of feeling which, however natural, does not meet with your entire approval. Many and many a time Harry felt annoyed with himself for being annoyed at Mrs. Bousfield's ways. He argued that he was to blame, that his temper was unduly irritable, and though this belief was, at best, but a partial one, it yet prevented him from taking any definite action with a view to entering upon a new life. Added to which, his uncle's will was the stronger. Whenever a difference of opinion arose, he—Harry—invariably yielded. Some are formed to command, some to obey. He belonged, by temperament and habit, to the latter class. It was easier for him to give in than to fight; but, all the same, he was unable to submit without many bitter thoughts arising in his



mind. He would dearly have liked liberty if only he could have gained it amicably.

It is wonderful how unobservant of character people are, even when they live in the same house together, and have every opportunity of studying each other's nature. It requires a very quick, sympathetic faculty to absorb the griefs and joys of one's fellow creatures.

Mr. Bousfield, good, worthy man as he was, did not possess this quality, which, after all, is exceedingly rare. He firmly believed that Harry was perfectly content to pick up pins and paper, read the newspapers, eat three substantial meals a day, take a little gentle exercise and play a rubber at whist. It was an existence eminently suited to an elderly gentleman devoid of country tastes and all love of field sports. He could not conceive of his nephew wishing for any other. For had not Harry every material comfort at No. 115? Plenty of good, plain food to eat, and sound, old wine to drink, a soft bed to lie upon, and servants to attend to his wants. What more could he possibly require? So reasoned Mr. Bousfield, and his mind was at rest. He felt, with a proud and approving conscience, that he had thoroughly fulfilled his duty towards the youth.

It would have made him open his eyes very wide had he but known that Harry would gladly have sacrificed all these things for the sake of a little young and cheerful society. He pined for the company of frolicsome people of his own age—people who were not quite so wise, and sensible, and demure, but who occasionally perpetrated a joke, or even told a naughty story, and who had some fun and “go” about them. He wanted to mix with men and women whose lives did not resemble a geometrical pattern, made up of nothing but straight lines.

In short, Harry's soul hankered after frivolity. He had been good and orderly so long that he yearned to go out into the world on his own account, and indulge in a few of its dissipations. Although the hero of this story, he was no hero in reality, only an ordinary human being, full of frailties and infirmities, and, in common with so many of us, far from satisfied with his lot in life.

Harry, unlike his uncle, was fond of young ladies, and once or twice had thrown out hints to the effect that the house would be decidedly pleasanter if their acquaintance were cultivated more than it was. But at the mere introduction of such a

subject, Mr. Bousfield turned up the whites of his eyes in holy horror.

"Women, my dear boy," he exclaimed sententiously, "are the bane of a man's existence. They destroy his common-sense, and turn him into a fool. Take my advice, Harry, and don't have anything to do with them, for they can bring you nothing but harm."

"You didn't always think so," returned Harry, who had heard of his senior's unfortunate attachment, and took a delight in alluding to it.

"Tut, tut, lad. What does that signify? Surely you are wise enough to profit by my experience when you have the chance. Getting singed is not a pleasant process, by any manner of means, as I can tell you."

Harry did not venture to respond, but he thought that he *would* very much like to get singed.

He had arrived at an age when bright eyes and sweet smiles seemed to him worth all the sage advice in the world. If only the opportunity had been granted, he would have been extremely susceptible to the fair sex. But Mr. Bousfield took care to exclude all dangerous feminine elements. He did not intend Harry to marry until he was thirty, and then not unless he himself had previously chosen the lady, and made sure of her being able to take part in a quiet rubber of whist. An uncongenial person would not do at all.

As for Harry's falling in love, the worthy man never seemed to consider such a contingency possible, any more than it occurred to him that his nephew was leading a dull, unnatural life, calculated to stunt the growth of his finer qualities.

An excellent person was Mr. Bousfield, but narrow in his views.

What *he* thought, others must think. He could not tolerate any difference of opinion, or make allowances for diversity of tastes, and innate dissimilarity of character.

A plentiful dinner, a substantial house over his head, a comfortable arm-chair and warm fireside satisfied him. He had no ambition, and never conceived that Harry had aspirations of a far more romantic and less humdrum nature.

Harry was a good lad. When with Mr. Bousfield he endeavoured to stifle his secret yearnings after change and variety. He did his best to please the old man, and to fall in with his various whims, although it was up-hill work.

But when he was alone—when the four sheltering walls of

his own room gave him a few moments' precious solitude, during which all restraining influences were removed, then his spirit broke loose from the bondage in which it was held, and clamoured despairingly for a wider and more extended sphere of action.

"It cannot go on for ever. It cannot surely go on for ever," said the still, small voice within him. But the same cry was re-echoed year after year, and yet no change took place. He began to give up hope, and to feel a dull apathy steal over him.

Oh! If something would only happen! But nothing ever did.

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## CHAPTER II.

### UNCLE AND NEPHEW.

OF all the depressing things in this world, few can compare with a genuine London fog. When the atmosphere is heavy and oppressive, dirty yellow in colour, and charged with impure matter that irritates nose, throat, and lungs, producing a sensation of slow suffocation, not one man in a hundred can feel cheerful.

Such a fog defies bricks and mortar. It penetrates everywhere, creeps insidiously into the human brain, and wraps the mental faculties in darkness. It robs the sun of its warmth and hides it completely from vision. The streets are impassable, or next door to it, and traffic is suspended. Omnibuses ply with difficulty, cabs all of a sudden become scarce.

Neither is getting up by gaslight, and eating your breakfast by gaslight, a good beginning to the day. You feel as if things were topsy-turvy, and the natural order of the world inverted. Shaving, from a delicate and hazardous operation, gets to be simply an impossible one, and the consciousness of a stubbly chin still further detracts from your serenity.

When Mr. Bousfield and Harry Hopperton quitted their bed-rooms on Thursday morning, December 13th, 188—, they found the staircase as dark as dark could be. It was the first regular fog of the season, and very unwelcome, too.

"Phew! What a day!" exclaimed the elder gentleman in tones of disgust, as he entered the dining-room, and sniffed the air like an ancient war-horse. "It's enough to poison one.

Smith," turning to the butler, who at that moment appeared, bearing a couple of hot dishes, "light the gas. The place is as black as night."

"Yes, sir," answered Smith. "Most certainly, sir."

His instructions were never to illumine the room on these occasions without first being told to do so by his master. Mr. Bousfield disapproved of servants taking too much on themselves. When the gas was lit, he took a critical look round the apartment to see if all was in order. He had not been able to do so before. Suddenly his brow contracted in a frown.

"Smith," he exclaimed, testily, "how often is it necessary for me to tell you the same thing? It seems to me that you have no eyes—no eyes whatever. Look at that blind."

"Yes, sir," responded the impassive menial, with an absolutely unmoved countenance. "I sees it."

"Then, perhaps, you can tell me what's wrong with it?"

"I was not aware, sir, as 'ow there was anything wrong with it."

"Good Heavens, man! Are you blind? I'd like to take a bet that you've been in and out of the room at least half-a-dozen times this morning, and yet you have never once noticed that that blind is as crooked as a ram's horn. It's really extraordinary how people can be so unobservant."

Whereupon, Mr. Bousfield himself proceeded to draw the offending article carefully up, until it hung at precisely the same level as its companion. This operation took some time, but when, at length, it was satisfactorily concluded, he sat down at the end of the table, with his back to the light—or rather what ought to have been the light—and rinsed the cups and tea-pot with hot water. Then, very slowly and deliberately, he measured out three spoonfuls of tea, and laid his watch on the table just in front of him.

It was his invariable custom to wait for five minutes while the tea was drawing. During these five minutes, he took up the newspaper, and ran his eye hastily over the foreign telegrams. When he returned his watch to his pocket, that was the signal for Harry to sit down likewise, and begin breakfast.

Every morning of his life he went through the same formula. Directly Harry was seated, he looked benignly across the table at him, and said:

"Well, my boy, and what is there to eat?"

Upon which, Harry, with due solemnity, removed the covers from the dishes. Their contents were always the same. Fish

in one, a couple of poached eggs and bacon in the other. He was sick to death of the sight, and weary of the taste of them, but Mr. Bousfield's palate was apparently less fastidious. At any rate, he never seemed to consider any variety desirable. Even in the matter of food he was rigidly conservative. Conversation did not flourish much during breakfast; but when the meal was nearing completion, and Mr. Bousfield had poured out his second cup of tea, he again resorted to the newspaper, and for the next half hour kept up a running fire of commentaries on the news therein contained. The following may be taken as a specimen:

"Hm! I see the Government have gone into Committee on the Irish Land Bill. Lord Fitzstephen proposes to limit the operation of Clause three to such holders as might desire to be brought within its scope."

"Does he?" said Harry indifferently, stifling a yawn, for he hated the very mention of the Irish question, having regularly had it dinned into his ears for the last two years with the result of turning him almost into a Home Ruler, if only out of opposition to his esteemed relative.

"Yes! it appears the Clause was discussed with much animation until half-past eleven o'clock. By Jove! they make these fellows work now-a-days, but even then, the subsequent clauses were forced to be postponed until to-day."

"Oh! indeed. Were they?"

"A very good leading article on Russia," continued Mr. Bousfield, after a slight pause, during which, Harry gazed stolidly into the depths of his tea-cup, and wished himself far away.

"Quite a first-rate article, and one that ought certainly to attract attention."

"Really!" ejaculated Harry, battling with an increasing lethargy, and trying to take an interest in the matter, since he knew, from experience, that he was expected to make some reply to his uncle's observations.

"Yes. It is evidently written by a man who knows what he is writing about, which is more than can be said for the majority of penny-a-liners."

"What is the gist of it?"

"The article is too long, also too important to be read out aloud. It requires digesting, but you can have a look at it later on. The sum and substance, however, is this.—First," and Mr. Bousfield pushed his spectacles up on to his forehead,

whilst his countenance assumed quite an animated expression, "the internal state of Russia, distracted by growing discontent, must be met, or temporized with, by a policy which shall divert the popular mind, and check military disaffection."

"Oh! Ah! Just so. Precisely," put in Harry.

"Second—the rankling soreness, left by a series of blundering and abortive political measures in the Balkan, which have succeeded only in exposing the contemptible character of the Russian political agents to whose hands Russia ill-advisedly entrusted her crooked intrigues, demands a remedy."

"Of course, of course," said his nephew soothingly.

"Ah! I am glad you are of the same way of thinking. I must say my own convictions are entirely similar to the writer's. Something should be done against these unprincipled agents, if only in the interests of Europe. Are we to be dragged into war and dictated to, simply because some low, ignorant, half-tamed Cossack chooses to bully and bluster? It's undignified for a country like England to brook being insulted." Here Mr. Bousfield stopped short, and stooping down, picked up a crumb, about the size of a pin's head, that had fallen to the carpet.

This action seemed slightly to confuse his thoughts. They were divided between Russia and the offending crumb.

"Let me see, where was I?" he resumed, looking to Harry to assist his memory. But Harry either could not, or would not, come to his aid.

"Ah! yes, I remember. We were talking of our political enemy, and I had got as far as the two first heads of the article. Now comes number three. Have you followed my remarks so far?"

"Yes, I think so. I have endeavoured to do so, at any rate."

"That's right. You see, Harry, Russia is attentively watching every phase of England's difficulty with Ireland, and she believes that her opportunity of taking matters into her own hands is rapidly coming. These—as is self evident—constitute the major causes for anxiety with regard to the Afghan question."

"Ah! so I suppose," said Harry, who had scarcely heard a word.

"I'm delighted at your taking this view, my dear boy, since it conclusively proves to my mind that we shall make a politician of you yet. Nothing would give me greater pleasure



than to see M.P. written after your name. I had thoughts of going into Parliament myself once, but somehow or other it never came off. Besides, politics were not so all-absorbing in those days as they are now. We are living in very critical times, Harry, and well-informed men of birth and position are sadly wanted to uphold the British Constitution; for if the gentlemen don't combine, you mark my words, they'll live to see themselves and the throne swept away by a crowd of socialistic demagogues." And having talked himself to a standstill, Mr. Bousfield brought his clenched fist down with a bang on the breakfast-table until the cups and saucers clattered.

"No doubt—no doubt!" said Harry, who always made a point of agreeing rather than be drawn into an argument. "By-the-way, uncle, is there any sporting news? What won the big steeplechase at Kempton yesterday? Lantern was favourite."

"I really don't know, Harry, and what's more, to be quite plain, I don't care. I never could see what it mattered whether a bay horse or a chestnut horse galloped first past the winning-post. And really when we are deep in a highly-interesting conversation—a conversation that embraces the most important problems of the day—it is peculiarly painful to me to find your mind running on such trivialities as racing and betting." And he shot a disapproving glance from behind the urn.

Harry coloured up to the roots of his fair, flaxen hair, but had the good sense to make no reply. He had long ago discovered the value of silence. Nevertheless, he was unable always to curb his natural inclinations, and, sad to say, the results of the Kempton Park races interested him a very great deal more than all the politics of all the foreign nations put together. He found Mr. Bousfield's talk inexpressibly prosy and wearisome. In fact, it was with the greatest difficulty that he could concentrate his attention sufficiently to listen.

His thoughts insisted on wandering away from the Irish, and the Cossacks, and the House of Commons. They dwelt, alas! upon horses, and hunting, and racing, fishing, and similar frivolities quite unworthy of one of the future upholders of the British Constitution.

Fortunately, Mr. Bousfield's displeasure did not last long. It soon evaporated. He was choleric, but forgetful. Besides, nothing could divert him from his usual habits.

When the clock struck ten, he laid aside the newspaper and folded it neatly up. Then he rose from the table, looked out of the window, and said :

"Ahem ! Harry. I am afraid we—er—shall not be able to take our accustomed walk—er. But if it clears up—er—I think I shall try and get as far as the Club. Whist is the only thing to do on such an abominable day, though I doubt if we shall make up a rubber. Folk fight shy of this pea-soup atmosphere as a rule."

"Shall you want me to go with you, uncle ?" asked Harry ; "because, if not, I promised to meet Mr. Ebor Smutch this morning."

"Eh ! What ? Meet Mr. Ebor Smutch ! Be careful, my dear Harry, be careful. I have a very strong idea that this Mr. Ebor Smutch is not exactly a good companion for you."

"He may or may not be for all I know. At any rate, he is most excellent company."

"So much the worse. That only intensifies the danger."

"What danger ?" said Harry, a trifle irritably, for it was not pleasant to feel himself treated like a baby, whose morals must not be exposed to temptation.

"The danger of wine, the danger of smoke, the danger of women," said Mr. Bousfield solemnly.

Harry gave a nervous laugh. As regarded the ladies, he had ideas of his own.

"Mr. Ebor Smutch and I are only very slightly acquainted," he responded. "I know next to nothing about him, except that he is an extremely amusing fellow."

"Ah ! so he may be, so he may be ; but all the same I doubt his proving a very desirable friend for you. He's far too fond of billiards and gambling for my taste."

Harry did not carry on the discussion, he merely asked again :

"Shall you want me to go to the club with you ?"

The elder man looked at his nephew. He was fond of him at heart, and desirous of shielding him from all harm. Evidently he did not relish the notion of leaving him long in Mr. Ebor Smutch's company, and yet considered it injudicious to state his objections more plainly. Young men were like young colts, apt to turn restive if roughly handled.

"I think," he said, after a bit, "that you might walk down when you have had your luncheon, say, between two and three o'clock. People may stay at home this weather, and if the worst comes to the worst, we can play double dummy."

Harry turned away in despair. Was it to be not only an evening of double dummy, but also an afternoon? He sickened at the prospect.

No wonder that the snug billiard room round the corner, and the lively, if somewhat shocking, sallies of Mr. Ebor Smutch possessed superior charms for his youthful mind.

He hankered after them with a longing all the greater because of the rare chances that were accorded him of indulging in their fascinations. Mr. Bousfield might keep his nephew from temptation, but he could not prevent him from desiring to be tempted, if only to ascertain what the sensation was like.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### SOMETHING HAPPENS.

WHEN two o'clock arrived, the fog, instead of lifting, had, if possible, become even denser. A dull, yellow shroud hid every familiar object in the square from vision. Harry, reluctantly, put on his hat and great coat and commenced to grope his way along the dismal streets, rendered recognisable here and there by a glimmer of gas.

Several times he took a wrong turning, for one road looked so like another, when you could scarcely see half-a-dozen yards ahead of you. He plodded on, however, until at last he contrived to reach his destination, without either having lost his way entirely, or being run over by some unseen vehicle. It was with a sense of relief that he walked up the broad, marble steps of the club, on through the hall and into the reading-room.

He found it all but deserted. There were only two or three members present, who sat huddled together under the large centre chandelier, making a melancholy attempt at reading. Harry nodded to a gentleman of his acquaintance, who growled out by way of salutation:

"Vile day. We idle people are fools to put up with the English climate at this time of the year."

"I agree with you. But, unfortunately, English comforts are not to be obtained abroad. Have you seen my uncle? He told me to meet him between two and three."

"Yes, he was in here about an hour ago, looking rather

miserable at all his usual allies having forsaken him. He tried to persuade me to sit down to double dummy, but that was really rather more than I could stand."

"I suppose he is in the card room," said Harry.

"Yes, I fancy so. He generally spends his afternoons there."

Harry passed on in search of Mr. Bousfield, and went straight to the apartment set aside for the whist players, and which usually contained some six or eight occupants. To-day, Mr. Bousfield was quite alone. His customary companions had failed him, and whilst awaiting their arrival, he was apparently indulging in a nap. At least, such was Harry's first impression as he glanced casually at his uncle's substantial form, comfortably resting in a large leather arm-chair, with the head drooping slightly forwards.

"Here I am," he said cheerily. "I hope I have not kept you waiting, but the street swere so awfully dark, there really was no getting along, and I had all my work cut out to find the way."

He waited for a reply, but none came. Mr. Bousfield's sleep must be an uncommonly sound one. Perhaps it was better to let him slumber on.

Thus thinking, Harry advanced on tip-toe, endeavouring to make as little noise as possible.

All at once, something in the strange quiet of his uncle's pose, and the death-like pallor of his countenance, sent a chill of fear through the young man's heart. A suffocating suspicion seized him which made his blood turn to ice, and brought great beads of perspiration to his brow. No! It was but an idea. It could not be true.

He drew still nearer, this time thoroughly alarmed, and took hold of his uncle's hand, which hung listlessly over the arm of the chair. Oh, horror! it was quite cold. So cold that it made all the pulsations of his being stand still, and filled him with sickening apprehension.

"Wake up, wake up," he cried wildly. "I have come to play double dummy with you."

Alas! Mr. Bousfield's days of double dummy were over. Death had scored the odd trick.

Harry rushed to the bell and rang it vigorously until a servant appeared. A few minutes later, and all the club was roused. From the topmost story to the basement it soon became known that on this drear, foggy afternoon something

mysterious had taken place. A messenger was immediately sent for the nearest doctor. He was not long in coming, though to Harry it seemed an age. He felt the patient's pulse and heart, and then with a shake of the head declared that he could do no good to one past human assistance.

"This gentleman has been dead some time," he said. "I cannot say exactly how long, but probably about an hour, since the body is already quite cold."

"Dead!" ejaculated Harry in awe-struck tones. "What of, what of? It seems impossible. He was quite well this morning—as well as ever he was in his life."

The doctor turned and looked at him. There was a kindly gleam in his dark eye. The young man's distress was so genuine that it aroused his sympathy.

"Death has resulted from heart disease," he said, "and judging from appearances it must have been perfectly painless. Let that fact console you for your loss."

A few minutes later, having gone through some necessary formalities, he took up his hat and departed, leaving Harry in a state bordering on distraction. The young man felt utterly bewildered, and added to his bewilderment lurked a horrible sense of guilt. Only that very morning he had longed for something to happen. He had asked himself, as he listened to Mr. Bousfield's observations and strove to conceal his weariness and impatience, if this dual solitude would go on for ever. His soul was like a maddened bird beating and struggling against the prison bars that held it. And lo! now the bars were unloosed, shivered at one stroke, strong and unexpected; whilst he, ashamed of the longings that had dwelt within his breast, stood and trembled. For what a change was this! What a sudden revolution brought about in a few short minutes.

He had pined and fretted so long, wearing his yoke outwardly with submission, inwardly with soreness of spirit, that he could not realise his overweening desire for variety was gratified. The Deity by one awful act had for ever answered all his petitions and prayers. And now he regretted their very existence, and felt humbled, humiliated and remorseful. As he gazed mournfully down at the still features, so cold, so rigid, a sudden yearning came over him to hear his uncle's voice again, prosing gently on about the Russian and the Irish questions, and to watch him picking up crumbs from the carpet. Henceforth they might lie for ever in the dining-room



of Number 115. A pang shot through his heart. Such little trifles, despised and resented at the time, had all at once grown strangely pathetic. "What *was*" instead of "what *is*" cast a halo of tender association round them, and brought the tears to Harry's eyes. He was young and impressionable and had seen nothing of Death. No wonder its majesty awed him and roused all his better nature. Any differences that might have existed between himself and his uncle were forgotten, swept away by the so-little-understood force that divides the living from the dead. A rush of sorrow, free of any self-calculating element, invaded Harry's spirit.

While the first shock lasted, he never once reflected on the freedom and independence to which he had attained—gifts, which so long as they were withheld from his grasp, he had imagined precious and desirable. Such thoughts might perhaps come later on, when the poor, still clay was placed under the ground, and its indestructible matter had formed fresh combinations of life, and leaf, and foliage. But they dared not obtrude in the actual presence of that quiet face, with its once bright eyes, gazing blankly out into the vacancy of eternal space, and the features wearing an impress beyond the finite and perplexingly limited comprehension of man.

Of the hours that succeeded, Harry retained but a very indistinct memory. They resembled a confused dream, full of strange chaotic images. Not until the funeral was over, and the family lawyer had made known to him the contents of his uncle's will, did he slowly begin to realise the situation.

With the exception of a few small legacies to Smith and the old servants who had been so many years in his service, Mr. Bousfield left his nephew every penny he possessed. Harry's reward had come at last, though, to do him justice, it never occurred to him to look upon it in that light. So much wealth was positively overpowering. Not only was he sole owner of the house in Bryanston Square, but also of an income only a hundred or so short of six thousand a year. And he was only twenty-three and had all the best years of his life before him. Happy youth! and yet, curiously enough, Harry was not nearly as happy as might have been imagined under the circumstances.

To begin with he was all alone. Owing to the seclusion in which Mr. Bousfield had lived, he—Harry—had no companions of his own age, and he felt their want sadly. Secondly, he missed his uncle in a way which astonished even himself. He was surprised to find how deeply, although quite uncon-



sciously, he had sunk into the groove. It was impossible to him to get out of it all of a sudden. This he discovered to his amazement. Had anyone told him such would prove the case, he would not have believed it, but by degrees he was forced to admit the fact, incredible as it first appeared.

Anyhow, during the winter months he lived on much as heretofore. It took him some time to realise that he was absolutely his own master. His means were sufficient to allow of the gratification of every wish. Strange! that so many of his wishes should have disappeared. Whenever he reflected on the future the same question always cropped up, "What was he to do?"

Like a prisoner who, after years of incarceration, at length regains his freedom, the brilliancy of that very light he so often had pined to see, dazzled him. He could not grow accustomed to it all at once.

Sometimes Harry thought he would go in for hunting, shooting and fishing. At others, a tour of the world seemed to offer superior attractions. One thing he was quite determined about. He would not stop any longer in Bryanston Square doing nothing. As a natural consequence of this decision, he remained, though he formed innumerable plans for letting the house and getting away.

Since his earliest days he had been in the habit of receiving advice without soliciting it. He often got tired of being told, "If I were you, my dear Harry, I would do this or that." Now, for the first time almost in his life, he felt sadly in need of a counsellor. His had been such a secluded, hermit-like existence, that he hardly knew how to set about altering it without assistance. He had so few acquaintances; none, of his own age and standing, who could tell him what was the best way for a young man with plenty of money to amuse himself.

You see, Harry's standard was not a very high one. At this stage of his career, like many people ignorant of the world, he considered personal enjoyment the chief aim and object of life, and it appealed far more strongly to his imagination than either progress or duty.

He believed, moreover, that amusement resulted from indulgence, and had a boyish impatience of labour, not having learnt as yet that the only real and legitimate pleasures on this earth are derived from it. He was but an ignorant youth, full of animal health and spirits, with a large amount of vitality

and an undeveloped brain that might or might not come under cultivation, according to circumstances. At present it did not trouble him in the very slightest degree. He was quite content to let it lie dormant, as do so many of his age and sex. But what use to find fault with the young?

Is it not good that they should go out into the world and profit by their own experiences rather than by those of their elders? Let them experimentalise if they will. Where's the harm? Failures will come fast enough, and with failures, soberness of view, whilst if they cherish illusions they, too, will quickly vanish. Every picture wants a little gilding.

Granted that Harry was young and innocent, possibly foolish. At twenty-three there is plenty of time before one to learn, to blunder, to regret, and to repair. If all men and women were born perfect, if they had not their various little faults and foibles, they would not prove nearly such interesting creatures as they do, or human nature be the nicely balanced compound of good and evil, tragedy and comedy, that it is.

After casting about in his mind for weeks, nay months, in search of an adviser, a brilliant inspiration came to Harry's aid. Why not seek counsel of Mr. Ebor Smutch? He was the very man, and he wondered at his stupidity in not thinking of him before. True, their acquaintance was but slight, and, with one exception, when he had lunched in Bryanston Square, entirely confined to the few games of billiards they had played together, which, by-the-bye, Mr. Smutch had invariably won, to the detriment of his—Harry's—pocket. But the sprightliness and originality of his conversation, the breadth of his views, and the variety of his experiences, social and sporting, had made a great impression on our hero. Despite Mr. Bousfield's cautions, Harry still retained a tolerably firm conviction that Mr. Smutch was a gentleman whose acquaintance it would be desirable to cultivate.

By the time Harry had made up his mind to consult this individual, the spring of the year was close at hand. Evidences of its near approach might be seen in the bursting buds that sprinkled with fresh and exquisite green the black, smoke-grimed London trees.

One fine afternoon Harry put on his hat and went in search of Mr. Smutch. He found him at the billiard-rooms, his coat off, his shirt-sleeves up, displaying a pair of sinewy arms, and with a pipe in his mouth. For want of any better opponent

he was playing a game with the marker. He greeted Harry with the utmost cordiality. The marker had no half-crowns to lose. Harry had.

"Hulloa!" he exclaimed. "Where the dickens have you been hiding all this time?"

"My uncle died two or three months ago," responded Harry, "and I have not been about much since then."

"The deuce he did! Well, I hope the old cock left you some tin."

Harry was a little startled at hearing his deceased relative termed an "old cock." He thought the appellation a trifle flippant. Nevertheless, there was a playful pleasantry about Mr. Smutch's manners which was not easy to resist. He stifled an irresistible desire to smile, and said with laudable solemnity:

"He has left me very nearly six thousand a year."

Mr. Smutch threw down his billiard-cue, and seizing Harry by the hand, wrung it with excess of friendship.

"Six thousand a year! By Jove, Hopperton, you *are* a lucky dog!"

"Somehow or other I don't feel like one, although I suppose I ought," said Harry, plaintively.

"Of course you ought. My dear fellow, pray accept my warmest congratulations."

"Thank you," responded his companion, flinching a little, for Mr. Smutch held him in a vice-like grasp, and wore a showy diamond ring, whose angles hurt him considerably. "I'm very much obliged."

"And how are you going to spend it, Hopperton?"

"Ah, that's the very point I wish to consult you about."

"You could not possibly have applied to a better person, or one more able to relieve you of any superfluous stuff."

"So I thought," rejoined Harry innocently. "You see it's a dreadful responsibility, having such a lot of money, especially when you don't quite know what to do with it."

"Oh, that's your dilemma, is it? Sit down, and I'll give you my ideas on the subject free of charge. Your own, I can clearly perceive, are very limited, but we'll soon extend the horizon. Six thousand a year, and don't know how to spend it! 'Pon my soul, I never heard such a joke in my life!"

And Mr. Smutch, clasping his hands behind his head, and stretching out his long legs, went off into a fit of laughter,

which proved so communicative that Harry, for the life of him, could not help joining in, though he had not any very definite notion what occasioned his mirth.

He only felt vaguely that Mr. Smutch was good company and possessed a sense of the ridiculous, which helped to enliven any conversation in which he took a part.

Moreover, he never discussed the Irish Question, and did not appear to take the slightest interest in the movements of Russia.

## CHAPTER IV.

### MR. SMUTCH TO THE RESCUE.

MR. SMUTCH had thrown himself carelessly down on a settee and proceeded to knock the ash from his pipe and to glance admiringly at the rich mahogany-coloured meerschaum, surmounted by its cracked and creamy rim. He was a great smoker and took a special pride in his pipes, which, however, he was always ready to part with for a consideration.

Meantime, Harry stood gazing at him as at a superior being. Somehow he never felt so childish and ignorant as in Mr. Smutch's presence.

That gentleman had the advantage of being five or six years his senior. By profession Mr. Ebor Smutch was a barrister, but briefs seemed few and far between. At any rate, he did not suffer from overwork. He was one of those individuals who, by some mysterious art unknown to their fellow-creatures, enjoy the very best of everything, without possessing any ostensible means. Nobody knew from what source the funds were derived which enabled him to go about. Yet go about he did. At Newmarket, Epsom, Sandown, and Kempton, he was constantly to be seen, and although he had not the *entrée* to the best London houses, he received many invitations from less fastidious sets in virtue of his being a "dancing man."

Mr. Smutch always complained of being "hard up." He made "hard up" an excuse for never parting voluntarily with his ready money, or carrying much of that valuable commodity about on his person. Yet the want of cash rarely seemed to prevent him from doing what he wished. If he desired a thing he bought it—whether he paid or not was another affair.

If he didn't, his tailor, his glover, his boot-maker, and his florist were greatly to be pitied.

In person he was a tall, powerfully-built man, over six feet in height, and broad in proportion. His athletic frame and strong muscles had won him the admiration of many a woman. He had a swarthy, somewhat Jewish cast of countenance, a sallow complexion, bold black eyes, set rather near together, surmounted by a pair of bushy eyebrows that met over the nose, and a close-cropped, bullet shaped head. The chin was clean-shaven, the mouth thick-lipped, and both coarse and sensuous in expression. It and the eyes went together. For the rest, a fine animal, well-grown and symmetrical, possessing a large capacity for food and drink, an enormous amount of innate egotism, inseparable from so robust an organism, and a brain, a conscience, and a digestion of the most accommodating, since none of the three ever troubled him in the slightest degree.

Mr. Smutch frequently boasted of his successes amongst the fair sex. He was one of those who look upon woman as the natural prey of man. His ideas were neither high-flown nor chivalrous. If the flower were there, he saw no reason why the bee should not rob it of its honey. What was honey made for except to be sipped? Of the flower he took no after-thought.

One point of view was enough for Mr. Smutch, and that was invariably his own.

As previously stated, Harry Hopperton had first made his acquaintance at the billiard-rooms, to which he was occasionally in the habit of resorting, and which Mr. Ebor constantly patronized.

The latter had all the attributes calculated to impress a young man, totally ignorant of the world and unversed in its vices. Harry took brutality for manliness, selfishness for wisdom, cunning for cleverness. It is just as easy to admire as to pick holes, particularly when you are pre-disposed to fall down and worship. Imagination weaves beautiful ideals, which Reality takes some little time to dispel. Harry was far gone in the ideal stage. He looked at Mr. Smutch poking a feather into the hole of his pipe, and saw only the hero, the great, strong, good man who could help him out of his dilemma, and open wide the portals of an enchanted world. He resolved to confide all his perplexities to him.

"You see, Smutch," he said, by way of a preliminary, "I



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can't arrive at any decision. It's most awfully difficult making up one's mind when you've nobody to advise you."

"I don't find it so," rejoined Mr. Smutch dryly. He had long ago conceived a contempt for his companion's intellect.

"Oh, no! of course not. But then, you see, you're different. You've been about all your life, whereas I——" and Harry stopped short.

"Have been kept in leading strings by a fond but foolish uncle. Yes, yes, I understand. What wickedness do you wish to plunge into? Eh? you sly dog."

Harry blushed, partly from pleasure, partly from modesty. It was delightful to be spoken to thus. He felt a man already.

"I don't think I wish to commit any particular wickedness, Smutch, but the fact of the matter is, I'm tired of kicking my heels about town doing nothing."

"Do something then. Something dazzlingly outrageous. Break the Ring, blow up the House of Commons, elope with your neighbour's wife—though there's nothing very new in that, nowadays."

Harry turned several shades more crimson than before, and looked what he felt—a trifle shocked.

"No, no," he said, nervously. "I don't mean anything of that sort."

"Then why the dickens don't you go abroad?"

"I should like to. The only question is, where?"

Mr. Smutch meditated a moment, then a queer, self-satisfied sort of smile flitted across his features, and he said:

"Have you ever done any fishing, Hopperton?"

"No, never! I wish I had. I'd give a hundred pounds to know how to fish."

"Honour bright? Will you give it to me if I undertake to make a fisherman of you?" And Mr. Smutch's black eyes glistened with curious greed.

Now Harry had used the expression unguardedly, and was a little taken aback to find that his words produced so ready an impression. Yet he could not well repudiate them. At least, he had an uneasy consciousness that if he did, he should lose for ever in his companion's esteem. Besides, he was an honourable young fellow, and prepared to abide by anything that partook of the nature of a promise.

"Yes," he said, after a slight pause, "I would."

Mr. Smutch brought the palm of his right hand smartly down on his checked trousers.



"Done!" he exclaimed with every appearance of satisfaction. "That's a bargain." Then, he added in his usual tones: "Curiously enough, I happen, at this moment, to know the very thing to suit you."

"Indeed! How fortunate."

"Yes, you say you are tired of London and want a change. Why not go salmon-fishing in Norway? It's an awfully jolly country, though it sounds a little far off, just at first."

Harry's face brightened. His sporting instincts, so long suppressed, woke into life.

"I shouldn't mind the distance one bit," he said, enthusiastically, "provided I could catch fish when I got there."

"I'll guarantee the fish," returned Mr. Smutch, with a patronizing smile. "A man in your position should amuse himself, and learn how to spend his money properly."

"Yes, I think so, too. It's no use keeping it, when one has got such a lot."

"Just so! And the best way to amuse yourself is to dangle a fly all the summer, and hunt all the winter. Fishing, hunting and shooting are the finest sports in existence."

"But what about a river? Are they not very difficult to get?" inquired Harry.

"They used not to be, but they are becoming so, nowadays. That abominable institution, the British tourist, with his waterproof, his umbrella, his loud voice, and bad manners, is penetrating everywhere. I declare one never feels so thoroughly ashamed of one's own countrymen and women, or sees their faults so clearly as one does when they are travelling. All John Bull's natural arrogance, bumptiousness and rudeness comes to the fore on these occasions. As regards Norway, he has already begun to teach the simple natives to be greedy, and now the most enormous rents are asked, and frequently given. Only the other day I heard of a river fetching no less than nine hundred pounds."

"What is to be done then?" said Harry, feeling a trifle damped.

"Well, as good luck will have it, a friend of mine holds the lease of some first-class fishing, and I believe," speaking very deliberately, and watching his companion's countenance, "that I could secure it for you at a moderate price."

Mr. Smutch did not deem it necessary to state that his friend and himself were identical. He had now been to Norway three times, and on each occasion was disappointed with

the sport obtained. Consequently he had begun to weary of that fair, primitive country, and to regret the money which he had precipitately invested in the lease of a river. Now, all at once, he saw an excellent opportunity of clearing out of it at a profit. Nothing could possibly have proved more fortunate. Harry was unsuspicious and credulous. He rose at the bait as voraciously as one of the very fish he was so desirous to catch.

"Have you any idea what your friend would take?" he asked eagerly.

Mr. Smutch protruded his nether lip, and looked pensive.

"I'm not sure, but if you are really in earnest, I'll find out. I fancy, however, that the river might be got, for about two hundred and fifty, or thereabouts." (It cost him exactly one thousand kroners, or a little over fifty pounds a year, but such details were better suppressed. They had no bearing on the situation, at least, in Mr. Smutch's estimation.)

"I would give that willingly," said Harry, with all the rash precipitation of youth and ignorance combined. "If there is any chance of your friend letting his river, don't allow the price to stand in the way."

Over Ebor's dark countenance spread a slow smile. Somehow, smiling did not suit his style of beauty. It gave it a peculiarly sinister appearance.

"All right, Hopperton, I'll do my best. Mark you, I don't want to give rise to false hopes. Let this be distinctly understood, but at the same time, I think," polishing his pipe with the corner of his pocket-handkerchief, previous to putting it away in a velvet-lined case, "that if you empower me to offer the sum named, *i.e.* two hundred and fifty, or say, five hundred for the two years which the lease has still to run, the matter might be arranged without much difficulty."

"Make any offer in reason, only be sure of getting the fishing. And, I say, Smutch, you'll come with me, won't you? You understand what I mean? As my visitor, *of course*"

"Pon my word, you're very good. I don't quite know if I could get away all the summer, but I might perhaps manage a fortnight or three weeks' holiday, just to start you fairly, and," with another of his unpleasant smiles, "to earn my hundred pounds."

"By-the-by," said Harry, "is there a house or an hotel anywhere near?"

"Yes, quite close; within a hundred yards or so of the river.

The people of the inn know me—that is to say, my friend—well, and are very civil and obliging. There is no trouble connected with the move. You want neither servants nor furniture, since they agree to board and lodge you for the moderate sum of four kronas a day?”

“And how much is a krone?”

“As near as possible, thirteen pence halfpenny of our English money. The only thing I should advise you to do, is to take out a few stores in the way of supplemental delicacies. The living is not very grand, according to our insular ideas, consisting chiefly of strong mutton, bad butter, and sour bread.”

“It’s awfully good of you, giving me all these hints,” said Harry gratefully. “What ought I to take?”

“Oh! some tinned soups and tongues and brawns. The four kronas are not supposed to include luncheon, so you have to forage for yourself for that meal. However, as one is nearly always out fishing, it does not much matter. I used generally to make up a packet of sandwiches at breakfast time, and put them in my pocket. Jam, too, is a desirable addition, as the native Syltetöi is the most horrible compound of cloves, cinnamon and strong spices. They quite destroy any original taste possessed by the fruit. Ham and bacon also, biscuits and a few tins of sardines all come in useful. Last but not least, don’t forget a good cheese, for if you can eat the Gammelost, it’s a deal more than ever I could do. The mere smell of it is enough to make one ill.”

“Thanks,” said Harry with a laugh. “I shall steer clear of Gammelost and provide myself with a Stilton instead.”

“Aye, do. There’s nothing a patch on a real, ripe, mellow Stilton. But these are only minor details. How are you off for rods and tackle?”

“I haven’t got any.”

“Haven’t got any? Bless my soul how funny. Just fancy living to the age of twenty-three and not possessing a salmon rod. You’ll be obliged to buy an entirely new rig-out.”

“Yes, I suppose so,” said Harry humbly.

“I hope you’re prepared to spend a good bit of money, Hopperton, though of course when a fellow has got six thousand a year, a few pounds more or less can’t make any difference.”

“I’m prepared to spend whatever you think necessary. I put myself entirely in your hands.”

“Very good, then. I’ll see you through. If only I could

spare a day, I would come with you and make sure of your getting everything right."

"I wish to goodness you would, Smutch. I should be most awfully obliged to you."

"The mischief is, I'm so infernally busy just at present."

"Are you? I did not know you were ever much bothered by business."

Mr. Smutch frowned, he disliked his statements being questioned.

"I am for the next three or four weeks. Every day that I don't attend the Law Courts is as good as ten pounds out of my pocket."

"How did you get away to-day?" enquired Harry innocently.

"Oh! to-day!" (airily.) "The court is not sitting."

Harry was certainly extremely credulous. Although at that very moment Mr. Smutch was lolling about on the settee, looking the incarnation of an idle man, he believed him implicitly, and imagined that in occupying any portion of his time he should be exposing his friend to a pecuniary loss. This he felt would not only be unjust but ungentlemanly.

The colour flew to his ingenuous face, dyeing it a vivid crimson.

"Smutch," he said awkwardly and with every outward sign of confusion, "I hardly know how to make my meaning clear without hurting your feelings. If I offend, you must forgive me and attribute it entirely to ignorance, not rudeness."

"Yes, yes, old man. Go on. What's up now!" said his companion, with a presentiment of what was coming, glancing benignantly at him.

"Only this, I—I am more or less a stranger to you, and—and I feel I have no right whatever to trespass upon your kindness. Now, what I wish you to understand, is that if—if," hesitating more and more, "you w—would devote a day to helping me, I should insist on making good any loss you might sustain in consequence. There!" and Harry pulled up short, looking not unlike a full-blown peony.

To his intense relief, Mr. Smutch's feelings were not a bit hurt by the proposition.

"All right, old chap," he said in his off-hand way. "Don't put yourself out about me."

But having once begun, Harry was determined to say all that was on his mind. Besides, the delicacy of Mr. Smutch's conduct made him resolve not to be outdone in generosity.

"You may want a few odds and ends," he resumed, "and as you are going to Norway this year, solely at my desire, it would be conferring a great obligation upon me if you would have them put down to my account. You do not mind, do you?"

"Not a bit," said Mr. Smutch, with a suppressed chuckle. He thought to himself that he had got hold of a regular greenhorn, and proposed to bleed him freely. The idea of *his* objecting to letting another person pay his bills was altogether too exquisite. He could hardly refrain from laughing outright. But it would not do to show his contempt too plainly, especially as he was more than satisfied with his morning's work. Five hundred for the river, and another hundred for his services, besides whatever he chose to charge for the time stolen from the Law Courts was not so bad. Mr. Smutch mentally resolved not to let this golden goose flutter out of his hands in a hurry. There were so many things that he might do. His imagination ran riot, and he even saw a chance at last of disposing of that valuable stud of weight-carrying hunters, which for the last two seasons had unsuccessfully been offered at Tattersall's to the Nimrods of the chase. There was old Shoeblack, who had just been nerved for navicular. By the autumn he would come out fit and well. Yes, Harry Hopperton should be accompanied to Norway in spite of jurisdiction, and, on his return, escorted to the Shires by the same kind Mentor.

Mr. Smutch arranged a very pleasant programme, not only to his entire satisfaction, but also to his own especial profit. When opportunities came in his way, he was a man who knew how to avail himself of them, and to become bear-leader to a young gentleman possessing six thousand a year, and no very clear ideas of spending it, was a stroke of luck such as did not happen every day of one's life.

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## CHAPTER V

### HARRY HOPPERTON STARTS ON HIS TRAVELS.

As may have been anticipated, Mr. Smutch succeeded in obtaining the Norwegian fishery of which he had spoken to Harry without the slightest hitch taking place in the arrangements.



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Everything was settled to their mutual satisfaction, and after repeated consultations, it was at length agreed that they should start for Norway the first week in June.

Harry was so impatient to begin fishing, that he would have liked to have gone even earlier, but his friend assured him the river was full of ice water until the middle of the month, and that from his own experience, the fish did not come up till later on in the season.

"It's no use kicking our heels about there doing nothing," he said. "You may take my word for it, that the end of June is quite soon enough for us to pack up and be off."

But this delay Harry could not brook, and by force of argument he persuaded Mr. Smutch to fix upon an earlier date. Meanwhile, there was much to be done before contemplating a start, as he found out before long, and each day Mr. Smutch seemed to discover fresh wants, so that at last they appeared almost endless, and the quantity of odds and ends that accumulated was something alarming.

Ebor was kindness itself. He gave up his entire time in a manner that cost Harry many compunctions. With a reckless disregard for all legal business, and accompanied by his new friend, he spent hours and hours in Mr. Farlow's well known shop in the Strand. Until now, he had been in the habit of patronizing the Army and Navy Stores for his piscatorial purchases, but the superior merits of some Farlow flies, belonging to a fellow sportsman, had filled his soul with jealous longing, and since Harry had offered to pay for anything he might require, he determined to set himself up liberally, and for once not to let money possess any deterring influence. Harry, though somewhat surprised at the amount of Farlow's bill when it came in, paid it like a man and a Briton. To Mr. Smutch's no small relief, he did not even make a remark as to the double supply of tackle charged.

Harry spent quite a small fortune on American split cane rods, choice Marana casting lines, best bronze reels with double check action, silk waterproof lines, &c., &c. As for flies, he ended by being fairly astonished at the largeness of his requirements. At two-and-sixpence each, Mr. Smutch bought them by the dozen.

One after one Harry was initiated into the several merits of Butcher, Popham, Black Fairy, Fiery Brown, Dusty Miller, Claret Jay, and last, but not least, the peerless and incomparable Jock Scott. By the end of a week he had learnt how



to distinguish them, for at first, to his unaccustomed eye, one looked very much like another. When his fly-book was said to be stocked and filled to bursting, he took a childish delight in poring over it, and noting all the little variations of tinsel, hackle, wing, which hitherto had altogether escaped his observation.

Those were good times for Mr. Smutch, who found play and pay peculiarly to his mind, since now, in spite of the demands of the Law Courts, he almost lived at Bryanston Square. Scarcely a day passed without his going there to dinner, and the expenses of meals were seriously reduced, thereby effecting a considerable saving. Mr. Bousfield's old tawny port—in the deceased gentleman's time only produced on very rare occasions—was particularly appreciated by him, and it was at his friend Ebor's suggestion that Harry brought it forth so often and made such an inroad upon the bin.

At last every preparation was completed. Berths were secured on board Messrs. Wilson & Co.'s fast sailing steamer *The Colorado*, and the two young men settled to travel from London to Hull together, where they were to embark. Harry, full of hope and joyous anticipation; Mr. Smutch, happy in the possession of a cheque for six hundred and fifty pounds and the prospect of getting away from his duns and of having every expense paid for the next three or four months to come. Dull care fled at the prospect, for even he had occasional bad moments, when a complete smash loomed nearer and more distinct than was pleasant. Now he should be able to tide over another season's hunting at any rate, and partly pay off one or two of his most pressing and offensive creditors.

He was in a rare good humour. His bear had proved himself to be a delightfully amiable and easy-going creature, and the task of hauling him in tow became every day a more profitable and, consequently, a more pleasant one.

Mr. Smutch, in the solitude of his own apartment, congratulated himself gleefully on having dropped into such a real good thing, just, too, when he was on his last legs and needed a favourable turn of Fortune's wheel. He was all cheerfulness and benevolence and, with one or two exceptions, Harry found him a most fascinating companion. As to his being an improving one, he began every now and then to have doubts. At times there was a coarseness about Mr. Smutch's conversation which jarred upon his sense of refinement. Still these were only temporary suspicions, and, on the whole, the two got on admirably.

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But there are few sayings which prove themselves to be truer than that which tells us how "Man proposes and God disposes."

Exactly three days before the young men were to start on their travels, Ebor, to his surprise on awaking, found himself covered from head to foot with a red rash, peculiarly irritating in nature. He thought very little of it, however, and dressed and went out as usual. The day happened to be exceedingly cold and stormy, as so often happens in this lovely climate of ours, even in June. By nightfall he felt extremely ill—so ill, that he was obliged to send for the doctor, who, on feeling his dry skin and rapid pulse, immediately pronounced him to be suffering from a severe attack of scarlet fever. Here was a pretty upset of all his plans. Could anything be more annoying and vexatious? Even when he recovered, every friend he possessed in the world would shun him like the pest, and weeks must elapse before all fear of infection would be over.

As he lay in his bed, Mr. Smutch ground his teeth with impotent rage. It was not so much the loss of the Norwegian trip that vexed him. In fact, he did not care greatly about going on his own account, but what made him mad was the thought of losing grip of Harry. He looked upon him as his particular golden goose, and now, if he were allowed to go out into the wide, wide world alone, was not somebody else sure to pounce upon so valuable a creature? It was far too rich a prize to be left to its own devices, and he, Ebor, who had been first in the field, would find himself supplanted by some wily and calculating schemer. It really was enough to make a saint swear. Words cannot describe Mr. Smutch's disgust at his inopportune illness. At first, he thought to conceal the nature of the malady, but on reflection, this proved impossible, and, as time was short, there was nothing for it but to write to Harry and explain the state of the case.

"I cannot tell you, my dear Hopperton," he wrote, "how horribly disappointed I am at being thus prevented from accompanying you, and, what's more, I'm afraid it's too late now for you to get anyone else in my place. Under the circumstances, it is useless my thinking of going to Norway, and I must resign myself to a dullish time of it in these infernal chambers. I only hope that you may spend a very pleasant summer, and, above everything, have good sport.

"Yours, with many regrets,

"EBOR SMUTCH.

"P.S.—Shall I try to pick up a decent nag or two for you, in your absence? It will be something for me to do when I get well. As we have been baulked in this cruise, I have another proposition to make. What say you to our hunting together from Foxington next winter? I generally take rooms at the hotel there, and could secure them for you, if I knew beforehand. We might have a very jolly time of it, which would partly make up for the present disappointment."

This note Mr. Smutch despatched without delay, and, in due course, came the following answer:—

"MY DEAR EBOR.—(The young men had grown very intimate, and called each other by their Christian names.)—If you are disappointed, so also am I. What crushing bad luck your catching scarlet fever. It seems a shame for me to go away and enjoy myself when you are on the sick list. I would offer to stay at home, even at the eleventh hour, if I thought, by so doing, I could help you in any way. But I'm afraid I can't, so shall start at the time originally fixed. If you find you can come out, later on, do so by all means. I shall always be delighted to see you. As to your proposal that we should hunt together, next winter, it has my hearty approval, though I shall have to learn how to hunt first, just as I must learn how to fish. What it is to be an ignoramus on sporting matters! Often and often do I regret my education. As it has been so neglected, I should like to go to Foxington before the regular season commences; therefore, please take the rooms, by all means. If you can find me two or three safe conveyances between this and my return, I shall be most awfully obliged to you. It was very good of you to think of it. And now, poor old man, good-bye, hoping that you may join me before the summer is over,

"Believe me,

"Your sincere friend,

"HARRY HOPPERTON."

Mr. Smutch felt decidedly comforted on receipt of this letter. If he had dictated it, he could not have composed one more to his mind. Harry had as good as made a definite and binding promise that they should hunt together. A thousand plans at once began to revolve in his busy brain.

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were pretty well played out, and buy himself a couple of sound young horses with the proceeds. He would teach him baccarat and loo, and a hundred other little games by which money could easily be lost and won, without the winner being called over the coals. He might not have felt quite so satisfied had he known that Harry, by one of those curious revulsions of feeling which often occur, without our knowledge or desire, in spite of the cordial terms in which his letter was couched, had been fairly astonished to find that Mr. Smutch's defection did not occasion him more concern. In fact, although he did not realize it at the time, an incubus appeared removed from his mind. He certainly felt more independent when thrown entirely on his own resources, and less like a baby in leading strings. It had already dimly begun to dawn upon him, that by placing so much power in Mr. Smutch's hands he might only be paving the way for exchanging one form of bondage for another.

These were unpleasant thoughts, thoughts full of ingratitude and suspicion, and he had never allowed himself to dwell upon them. Nevertheless, they would obtrude at intervals, and their very existence now modified the regrets which he had expressed in his letter. He was sorry Mr. Smutch could not accompany him to Norway, but not poignantly or inconsolably so. On the whole, he bore the disappointment remarkably well. Besides, he was too busy and excited to feel his friend's loss as much as he might otherwise have done. The few days that remained to him in London were fully occupied.

Packing up is a very serious business, especially to people who are accustomed to stay at home all their lives, and the quantity of luggage that accumulates—the things not actually necessary, but which may come in useful if taken—is something surprising.

His various stores, wines, spirits, comestibles, and so on, had been sent beforehand. Nevertheless, Harry had no less than nine packages to look after, namely, two large portmanteaus, stuffed till they were almost bursting, a box of fishing-rods, another containing nets, gaffs, baskets, etc., an enormous Gladstone bag, so heavy that it took a strong man to lift it, a dressing-case with silver-mounted bottles, which, by-the-way, proved perfectly useless, and a source of trouble from first to last, a bundle of rugs and walking-sticks, a small hand-bag, with books, cap, and comforter, and a travelling bath, into which was thrust wading-breeches and brogues.

## LANDING A PRIZE.

Poor Smith had been in a frantic state of ~~fuss~~ and muddle for days past. He would go off in hot haste in search of an article, and forget what that article was by the time he had descended the stairs. Then he would come panting up again, laden with all sorts of absolutely useless things, paper-knives, almanacks, newspaper-holders, etc., which he insisted on cramming into the already over-crammed portmanteaus, only to be surreptitiously taken out again by Harry the moment his back was turned. For three whole nights the worthy and excellent man did not sleep a wink, so great was his anxiety of mind. He lay in bed thinking what he had forgotten, and going over Harry's entire wardrobe, until the few wits he originally possessed got fairly addled over light suits and dark suits, silk socks and woollen socks, flannel and linen shirts, and all the paraphernalia of a gentleman's toilet.

At last everything was in readiness, and then came the parting.

That was a tremendous ordeal. Any one might have thought that Harry was going to Timbuctoo, instead of to a civilized land, annually visited by a large number of British tourists.

Every servant in the house assembled in the front hall to wish good-bye to their young master, who was beloved by all. They were dreadfully overcome, especially the females, whose softness of heart on these occasions is something truly remarkable. Mrs. Bridget's prominent blue eyes were filled with tears, as also were the kitchen-maid's, who, however, had only entered into her situation the previous week. The depth of her grief did her honour. When Harry shook her by the hand and said, "Good-bye, Sarah. Take care of yourself whilst I'm away," she howled aloud, and had to have recourse to a grimy pocket-handkerchief to hide her woe.

As for Smith, his emotion mastered him to such an extent that at the last moment he forgot to put the Gladstone bag into the cab, and it was only owing to Mrs. Bridget's setting up a prolonged scream that that most useful appendage to modern travel was not left behind.

All this, as may be imagined, was exceedingly trying to Harry's feelings. It made his thoughts dwell on the unknown bourne from which no traveller returns. He felt as if he were leaving the home of his childhood for ever, never to return, and often as he had longed to quit it, there was a sobering effect about the actual realisation of his wishes.

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horrible and uncomfortable sensations, vanished. It was a good thing they did not last long. He began to take in the fact that he had at length started on his travels all by himself, and his pulses thrilled with an exhilarating expectancy and excitement. If he had had a companion he would not have felt half so heroic. His spirits revived. As the well-laden four-wheeler in which he was seated rumbled along the noisy streets, he broke out into little snatches of song and bird-like whistling of the last popular organ tune.

He took his ticket for Hull, and arrived at that place between eight and nine o'clock. The steamer was not due to start until a little after ten; but having nothing to do in the town, he hailed a fly and drove straight to the wharf. All round him in the deepening twilight he could see the lights of the houses shining brightly out. Ahead gleamed the indigo blue harbour, with the tall spars of the various ships clearly defined against the darkling sky. The stars glistened, the moon glided gracefully from behind a soft bank of nebulous cloud, and cast a silvery sheen on the wide mouth of the Humber. It was all beautiful and new to Harry, especially as viewed in this light. An exquisite sense of freedom descended upon his hitherto pinioned spirit.

The very fact of not being ordered about by another person, and told to do this and that, was enough to render him a totally different individual.

Oh! if only half of the human race could be brought to realize that what the other half longs for and eats its soul out in miserable silence for, is just to be let alone. Let alone! What magic is there in the words. To receive no unasked advice, to be the recipient of no undesired counsels, and above all to be free from peremptory command. To come in when they like, to go out when they like, not to be submitted to a perpetual cross-examination on every conceivable and inconceivable subject, and in short to feel that their lives are their own, and not at the disposition of someone else. Then, perhaps, they might be worth the living. The desire for freedom is strongly implanted in the bosom of the human race. It is a perfectly natural and altogether legitimate sentiment.

Freedom does not necessarily mean a wish to commit any outrageous action, and yet how seldom can parents, relatives and husbands be brought to realize this fact. One looks around in the world and sees all the happiness and content of dozens of young lives crushed cruelly out, owing to the tyranny



of those who happen by the force of circumstances to have dominion over them. This tyranny proceeds almost entirely from the inability of the old to accommodate their way of thinking to the young. They do not sympathize with them as they should. They want their sons and daughters to look upon things entirely from their own sober and somewhat jaundiced point of view. They make little or no allowance for hope, ardour, impulse, strivings, all the follies and inexperience of youth.

Harry vaguely felt something of this, as he paced slowly up and down the deck puffing meditatively at a cigar, and enjoying the cool night air.

He was neither vindictive nor hard hearted. He entertained a distinct respect for his uncle's memory. Nevertheless through his instrumentality he had suffered much, and the remembrance of that suffering still clung to him. He had been deeply shocked by Mr. Bousfield's death, but as he trod the clean boards of *The Colorado*, and looked up into the clear sky above, he could not help feeling rather resentfully that three-and-twenty precious years of his life had been completely wasted. As far as pleasure went, they were a total blank—a dull, colourless picture made up of nothing but dark tints. Luckily his capacity of enjoying the present and the immediate future still remained, and he determined to make amends for the past, and derive as much amusement as he could from his six thousand a year. He had tasted the insipid cup of monotony until his palate had become nauseated. It now hungered for variety and fresh sensation.

The threshold of a new world seemed opening out to him as he stood and watched the stars and the moon and the still sheeny water, with its burden of black and ghostly craft that looked so like a fleet of privateers such as he had read of in his childhood.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### MAKING FRIENDS.

SHORTLY after nine a bell sounded, and Harry, who by this time had developed a rare appetite, eagerly replied to the summons, and descended into the saloon. Here supper was laid out, which consisted of bread, cheese, butter, and sundry

cold meats. He would have turned up his nose at such fare at home, but he was too hungry now to be fastidious, having tasted nothing since one o'clock.

He seated himself at the long table, and then, although rather overpowered by a sudden feeling of intense shyness, glanced upwards and downwards in order to take stock of his fellow-travellers. All told, they were about fifty in number. It was, as yet, rather early in the season, and the influx of tourists who annually invade Norway was only just beginning.

Most of the passengers were "old hands," on their way out to catch the "wily salmon." Some were accompanied by their wives and daughters, but the majority evidently preferred their own society. Typical sportsmen these, with keen angler stamped on every feature. You could tell them by their manly, weather-beaten faces, by their broad, checksuited forms, and, above all, by their muscular woollen-stockinged calves, and loose, comfortable-looking knickerbockers.

They soon found each other out, and fraternized; indeed, many of them were old acquaintances, who frequented the same haunts year after year with unexampled constancy.

It was both interesting and amusing to hear them exchanging their experiences, and discoursing on flies, tackle, etc., as if they had been the most important topics of conversation, in comparison with which all others were feeble and insignificant. Some went in for single gut casting lines, and swore only by them, others for treble; some pinned their faith on Castle Connell rods, others had not a word to say in their favour, and considered them whippy and wanting in lifting power.

Harry, fresh from his visits to Mr. Farlow, listened attentively to all that was said, and although he did not pick up much actual knowledge, he learnt how extraordinarily men's opinions vary in matters piscatorial, and how wide a field the subject embraces.

He could not help feeling curious as to the company present, and before long again began taking surreptitious peeps at them. Like Don Quixote, he was thirsting for romance and adventure. But alack! neither at the head nor at the bottom of the table could he succeed in seeing a single fair being capable of making his susceptible heart palpitate. To speak the truth, the ladies were a plain, dowdy, uninteresting lot—at least in Harry's estimation.

He was deeply disappointed not to find Youth and Beauty

better represented, having pictured in his mind's eye several very pleasant flirtations. Evenings spent on deck in the moonlight, snug corners out of the wind, sheltered by one umbrella, and so forth. But, so far, he could not perceive anyone with whom he should like to pass the time in this agreeable manner. There was an old lady who had a yellow face and grey hair, surmounted by a stalking cap and a green gauze veil. *She* did not make his pulses flutter; neither did a younger one, about forty, clad in a badly fitting ulster, that was several sizes too small for the enormous *tournure* beneath; nor a pale, faded woman whose hair, complexion and dress were all exactly of the same hue, namely—sandy.

Harry's spirits fell a little. He foresaw that his anticipations were not likely to be realized. Then, with a desperate effort, he summoned up sufficient courage to take a sly look at his right-hand neighbour, and lo! what an apparition. The blood went tingling to his cheeks.

For she proved to be a young and very pretty girl—no, woman. That she had not long seceded from the mighty army of spinsters was evident, since a suspiciously new-looking wedding-ring adorned the third finger of her left hand. It still wore the brightness of a jeweller's shop, and proclaimed the bride.

Harry was so overcome that he turned his head away quite bashfully. He would not intrude upon the privacy of the happy pair. But delicate as was this instinct, his curiosity soon conquered it. He had not half seen what she was like. He must have another look.

Therefore, whilst the divinity was helping herself to a second helping of cold boiled beef, he profited by the opportunity to take a stolen stare. His heart went pit-a-pat; for this time he ascertained without doubt that she had an awfully nice pink and white complexion, a sweet little rosebud of a mouth, and a pair of large, dark eyes that in themselves were enough to turn a man's head. Moreover she did not look a day over twenty. What a combination of charms and perfections!

He fell in love with her on the spot. He was in that state when a young fellow is prepared to fancy himself smitten by the first decent woman he sees, and to do him justice, she was really a pretty little thing, fresh and sweet, though without the air of a *grande dame* accustomed to move in good society. But Harry had mixed too little with the world to note such subtle distinctions. Without rhyme or reason he felt quite

venomously inclined towards the husband. What a pity she had one. She looked much too young and too nice to be married.

By-the-by, what was he like? Some brute of course.

Why is the husband of every good-looking woman always a brute in another man's estimation, and degraded either to the rank of a nonentity, or else spoken of as a surly, ill-tempered cur?

Again Harry's curiosity prompted him to gaze. He tried to do so as negligently as possible, but, as ill luck would have it, he caught the creature's eye. Ugh! he was even worse than he thought.

An insignificant, round-shouldered, hollow-cheeked little man, with flaxen hair, a bilious complexion, muddy and unhealthy in tint, goggle eyes with white eyelashes and *blue spectacles*! Harry shuddered at the sight of him. This unprepossessing personage now leant forwards, and evidently resenting the admiration of a stranger for *his* wife—*his* property, addressed some remark to her in a tone of such familiarity and brusqueness as left no doubt whatever as to their relationship.

She just nodded her head and dropped her eyes. Harry could not help noticing how her eyelashes rested like a soft, dark drift on her round cheeks; and then insensibly he caught himself pitying her and wondering how such a bright, beautiful young thing could ever have brought herself to marry so ugly and repulsive-looking a specimen of the masculine race. Where was the attraction? He failed to see it, unless accounted for by that law of nature which brings like and unlike together, no doubt for the benefit of the world, but greatly to the unhappiness of the individual.

He kept his speculations secret, however, and munched away perseveringly at his under-done roast beef, when suddenly a soft voice by his side thrilled him through and through, and made every nerve tingle with a strange sense of confusion and delight.

"It looks a fine evening. I do hope we shall have a good passage, don't you?"

The words were absolutely commonplace, yet it is difficult to describe the impression they made on our hero, or tell of the glance that accompanied them. His heart stopped beating, and the colour flew to his cheeks, just as if he had been a school-girl in her teens. He was so pleased at her speaking

to him first—so pleased, and yet so horribly, idiotically flattered and bashful, that his answer was all but incoherent.

Fortunately, it appeared quite satisfactory to his companion, who, in spite of her husband's scowls, continued the conversation as if perfectly unconscious of the sensations she had given rise to.

"Are you going to Bergen?" she asked, confidentially, "or do you get out at Stavanger?"

There was something very friendly and encouraging about this little person. You could not help feeling at home with her. Even Harry began to gain courage, and to recover his senses, which had temporarily taken leave of him.

"No," he answered, and this time it was possible to hear what he said, "I must go to Bergen, I believe, in order to reach my destination. Do you know Norway at all?"

"No, not at all. This is my first visit."

"Ah! then you can't give me any directions as to my best way of going to a place called Sandéthal?"

"Sandéthal!" she exclaimed with vivacity. "How funny! Why we are going there also."

"No! are you?" ejaculated Harry, making no attempt to conceal his satisfaction at the information, for the presence of so pretty and nice a companion would considerably add to the attractions of the spot. One could not fish all day long, and a little female society would prove eminently agreeable of an evening, when he came home tired and wanted to be amused. It was a selfish thought, no doubt, but, at the same time, a truly masculine one.

"Yes," she resumed, evidently gratified by the manner in which he had received this piece of news, "according to present plans we intend to stay at Sandéthal about a fortnight, and then move on somewhere else; but it depends principally on what sort of sport Ebenezer has."

"Good gracious!" thought Harry, "what a name! But he might have been an Ezekiel, or an Obadiah, or a Beelzebub for the matter of that. He's bad enough for anything."

"Is your husband a great fisherman?" he inquired politely. "If so, perhaps I may be able to give him some fishing."

She laughed out loud, and her laugh was very clear and girlish. But she checked her mirth suddenly, and said with droll solemnity:

"Oh, dear no. I don't suppose he ever threw a fly in his life. He rejoices in two professions. When he is at home he



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is an inspector of schools, but when he is abroad he is a lepi-  
dopterist." And she infused an immense amount of impor-  
tance into the last word—more, indeed, than appeared quite  
genuine.

"I beg your pardon for my stupidity, but a lepi—lepi—  
what did you say?"

"I said lepidopterist," with her eyes shining mischievously.

"Oh! indeed!" said Harry, feeling decidedly impressed.

"It's rather a mouthful, isn't it? but I always call Ebenezer  
a lepidopterist because it sounds so grand and puzzles people  
so."

"I am ashamed to confess my ignorance, but what is the  
exact meaning of the expression?"

"Meaning? Oh! it means a person who catches moths  
and butterflies; who covers every bush he comes across with  
sugar and treacle, and who goes out at all unrighteous hours  
of the night armed with a green gauze net and a pile of lit le  
cardboard boxes that smell most horribly of camphor."

"And is *that* what your husband calls sport?" exclaimed  
Harry, a trifle contemptuously.

"It's his sort of sport. If he comes back with one or two  
common-looking specimens, which yet are not common, but  
rare, he considers he has had an excellent evening of it."

"How strange."

"Yes, it seems strange to you and me, but then," looking  
brightly up at him, "we are not lepidopterists, and possess no  
soul for beetles and grubs. At present we are out for a holiday,  
and Ebenezer hopes to have a real good time among the moths."  
And she glanced at her husband to see in what spirit he was  
taking her badinage. But in his surly face she found but little  
encouragement to proceed. He munched away at his bread  
and cheese in stolid but disapproving silence.

"And do you go moth-catching too?" inquired Harry, who  
could not conceive wherein consisted the amusement of this  
particular species of sport, and therefore wished to learn more  
about it.

A disdainful smile curled the corners of her very pretty  
mouth.

"Not I. Like a sensible being, I prefer my bed; but,"  
lowering her voice so that her husband should not overhear  
the remark, "I'm more or less obliged to pretend to take an  
interest in the odious creatures."

His admiration received a slight shock. There was a



deception implied in her speech of which he could not but disapprove, especially as her frank, open manner seemed entirely to contradict such sentiments.

"Why?" he asked bluntly. "I don't see that you are obliged to take an interest in things you dislike."

She coloured. His words contained an unconscious touch of reproof, which struck home.

"Well, the truth is we have not been married very long."

"I gathered as much," said Harry. "You look like a bride."

She shrugged her shoulders, and added with a careless gesture: "It does not do for a woman to give too strong an expression to her likes and dislikes just at first. Men don't approve of it."

"Oh! don't they? You speak with great authority. Is that the result of your vast experience?"

She turned her eyes full upon him, with a comical air of superior knowledge.

"Yes, of course. But it's useless entering into explanations. I see you are a perfect ignoramus in all matters connected with matrimony, and, if you'll take my advice, you'll remain so."

Harry blushed up to the roots of his hair. It was a little absurd her talking to him as if she were old enough to be his mother.

"I'm not thinking of getting married just yet," he said. "But we have wandered from the point. What I want to find out is, why a woman should pretend things she does not feel?"

"Don't you know that we are all born actresses? The sex are famous for their powers of deception."

"Granted, but still my question remains unanswered."

"Good gracious! How persistent you are! Let me ask you one back in return, and, perhaps, you will be able to answer it without my help. Tell me then, why is it necessary to keep a man in good humour, why has the Deity conferred upon the race such very uncertain tempers, and why are they just like wild beasts with regard to their passions and appetites?"

And so saying, the little bride, who, if she had not been married very long, had clearly lost no time in making some very remarkable discoveries connected with the state, turned to her husband, and said:

"Have you finished your supper, Ebenezer? If so, perhaps you had better go and see that your boxes are carefully stowed away."

"They're all right," he growled in reply. "I took care to put them safely in the cabin directly I came on board. It's not likely I should leave them kicking about."

"In the cabin! Oh, dear! Oh, dear! You know how I hate the smell of camphor."

"I do, but unfortunately I can't help that. You should have dated your aversion to it in time."

She bit her nether lip, but said nothing. She only looked at him with a hard look in her bright, young eyes, which for the moment quite altered their expression.

Ebenezer rose from his seat, and displayed his full proportions. They were not much more than five feet in height. Looking at him thus, he appeared all feet and head. He stood over his wife and hesitated. She sat still, and took no notice of his movements. Her quietude irritated him.

"Aren't you coming, too!" he said sharply. "What the dickens do you want to sit here any longer for?"

She jumped up with sudden alacrity, and an apparent willingness that was baffling to a quarrel-seeking man.

"Yes, of course. I was only waiting for you. Let us come, by all means."

Harry felt vexed with her for going without giving him a parting word; but his vexation soon passed away, for, as she walked out of the saloon, she turned and smiled in a manner which seemed to say, "Won't you come, too? Do."

She had very coquettish ways, this little bride, that were evidently natural to her individuality.

At all events, Harry found them so, for he gravitated towards her side, much as a needle is drawn by a magnet. They had only exchanged a few sentences, but she interested him greatly.

Very shortly he went on deck, and the first person he saw was his late companion standing by herself, leaning against the bulwarks, and looking meditatively down into the water. She had changed her straw sailor hat, and put on a stalking cap. It fitted her little head closely, and her starlike eyes shone out from under the brim like two diamonds. They were dangerous eyes to Harry, because he had never been accustomed to such things, and they filled him with a species of intoxication that pervaded his whole frame.

"Where is your husband?" he asked as he joined her, trying to throw as much civility as he could into the inquiry. "Has he gone after the moths in hopes of catching one in his cabin?"

"At the présent moment, I believe him to be fussing about after the beetle boxes. We might lose all our luggage rather than one of those precious receptacles."

"He seems a great enthusiast, at least, according to your accounts."

"Poor Ebenezer!" with an arch of her delicate eyebrows. "I really think he is a little off his head. It seems such a queer thing to waste so much time on moths and butterflies, when you might be studying human beings."

"They are more interesting, certainly," said Harry, looking down into her soft face, which was lit up by the moon, that just caught it with a silvery light.

"Yes, the contradictions of men and women, their characters, natures, and dispositions, possess a greater fascination for me than anything else in the world. One admires beautiful scenery, of course, but chiefly as the accompaniment of man."

"You puzzle me tremendously," said Harry, emboldened to make the confession by her extreme friendliness.

"Me? Wherefore? Pray explain in what way."

"Because you and your husband appear so totally dissimilar that I can't help wondering how you ever came together."

She drew a deep breath, and immediately changed the conversation, which, on so short an acquaintance, was certainly getting very personal.

"Are you a good sailor?" she asked presently.

"I don't know. You'll laugh at me, but I've never been on the sea in my life."

"Haven't you, really? You will soon find out your capabilities, I expect."

"No doubt I shall. I only hope my powers of resistance may prove stronger than I anticipate."

It was very pleasant work, standing there in the soft, balmy air of a summer evening, with the harbour lights shining all round, and the quiet, darkling sky overhead, talking to a pretty woman. What if their observations were of the most commonplace description? The hour and the scene rendered them thoroughly enjoyable. It was a new experience in Harry's life, and one that he greatly liked.

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And the pretty woman seemed to feel the romance of the tender twilight also. For she grew very communicative and confidential, in an artless, innocent, girlish sort of way, to which it was impossible to take exception. She and Harry were just like two children. Before many minutes had gone by they had exchanged names, ages, plans, places of dwelling, etc.

She told him her name was Annie Thompson, that she would be twenty next birthday, and that she had been married exactly four weeks. And as she volunteered this piece of information, a little unconscious sigh escaped from her that was not lost upon her listener, who became more and more engrossed by the charms of his companion. Then she threw off the melancholy which had stolen upon her, and said with a little forced laugh, that somehow made his heart grow big:

"It seems so odd to be a married woman. I have not realised it yet, and I hope, I do hope I shall learn, after a bit, not to laugh at the moths. You were quite right when you said one ought not to pretend."

Harry made no reply. A sense of sadness prevented him from doing so. He detected a tragedy, though perhaps such a very common occurrence as the life-union of an ill-assorted and uncongenial husband and wife is hardly worthy of the name.

He liked the little woman, and he felt sorry for her. A bond of sympathy seemed already to have sprung up between them, in which, needless to say, Ebenezer was not included. Her hand was lying on the top rail of the bulwarks close to him. It was getting rapidly dark; great banks of cloud were passing themselves on the horizon, and gradually spreading upward. Harry touched Mrs. Thompson's hand with his in a way that was not accidental, but which might have been so construed had the lady chosen. The next moment he bitterly regretted having committed so great an impertinence.

By the darkening light he could see her eyes suddenly fill with tears, and without a word she turned away and left him. He felt miserably ashamed of himself.

But before long his thoughts were diverted from the unpleasant channel into which they had fallen. The screw began to vibrate. Ten o'clock chimed out from St. Mary's church hard by, and slowly, very, slowly, the good ship slid away from the side of the dingy wharf, and, with a dexterity almost marvellous, was steered past the numerous craft lying

snug in harbour, through the wharf gates, which were so narrow that there was only just room to pass, then, turning sharp to the right, she threaded her way amongst the countless barges lying black and still on the smooth water, and so at length out into the widening mouth of the Humber.

When once fairly free of all these impediments, speed was gradually, but steadily, increased. The low, flat lands on either side faded by degrees, and before long the roll of the mighty ocean began to make itself felt by those on board *The Colorado*. The wind freshened, angry crests of white foam appeared on the top of the swelling waves. The murmur of tongues on deck ceased. An ominous silence succeeded, and one by one the passengers glided swiftly away. Ebenezer, with his wife tucked securely under his arm, had been walking up and down, up and down, like a sentinel on duty.

Suddenly the vessel gave a lurch, worse than any of its predecessors, and Mr. Thompson uttered a piteous cry. He dropped his better half there and then, and tottered to the ship's side. Poor man! When he turned round again, his countenance was positively ghastly, and contorted by inward pain.

"Annie," he gurgled, disjointedly, "I can't stand this any longer. I'm go—going to make a bolt of it."

"I think you had better," she responded, as sympathetically as a person can who has never suffered from the miseries of sea-sickness and wonders at the sensation.

When Ebenezer had disappeared, she turned to Harry and said:

"I'm afraid we are going to have a rough passage after all."

"I'm afraid so," he responded limply. "It looks uncommonly like it."

He tried to talk and to brave it out a little longer, but a deadly sensation of discomfort, a kind of giddiness in the head, and of lightness in the stomach, which reminded him of a high swing when the air seems to rush through it, was creeping over his frame, rendering even Mrs. Thompson's presence a matter of indifference. Twice she made some playful remark, and twice he essayed to open his lips in response. The third time he raised his head with a species of desperation, and said spasmodically:

"Forgive me, but—I—I—must follow your husband's example."

Whereupon he also rushed downstairs as fast as ever he



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as imminent.

Mrs. Thompson looked at his retreating form, and mur-  
mured :

"Poor young man."

She had not said "Poor young man" when her Ebenezer  
d succumbed so woefully, under her very eyes as it were,  
at then he was fifteen years her senior and her husband,  
which made all the difference.

As for herself, she delighted in seeing the great green waves  
ssed from the vessel's prow, and churned into foam by her  
arp keel. The swell and the motion caused her no incon-  
venience. They only brought back a sense of freedom which  
for four whole weeks she had not once experienced. She  
ayed upon deck till quite late, and was happy. Had it not  
en for Ebenezer she would have remained there all night,  
at she feared his querulous reproaches if he imagined that he  
as being neglected. True, he did not pay *her* much atten-  
on, but he expected a great deal in return. After matrimony,  
at is generally the way. The woman lords it for a few  
onths during the time of her engagement, but she pays for  
is piece of impertinence all the rest of her life. Her reign  
a very short one, and soon over, as Annie Thompson was  
eady beginning to discover.

## CHAPTER VII.

### A STORMY PASSAGE.

For all bad sailors, that was a truly awful night, in which they  
ffered the pains of Purgatory. The wind steadily freshened,  
til it blew a regular gale, and at every moment the steamer  
oped her nose right in amongst the angry waves, that broke  
h a sullen roar over her bows. Fierce jets of water, after  
t being churned into a snowy mass, dashed violently against  
e port-holes, now immersing them altogether, anon, as the  
essel gave a laborious upward heave, leaving the small round  
glass streaming with moisture.

The decks were black, slippery, and dripping wet. The  
abers creaked and groaned in a manner horribly suggestive  
of their fragility, and of the slight rampart they formed betwixt



Life and a revolting Death. Lamps swung, chains clanked, curtains swayed to and fro, crockery smashed, doors banged, and noise of every description succeeded noise, distressing to the ear and alarming to the mind. Oh! the odious unsteadiness and insecurity of it all! the perpetual motion and continual sense of danger. With every lurch made by the too lively boat, Harry felt his head swim, and his inner man responded sympathetically to the whirling and confusion of his brain. He tossed off his clothes and scrambled into his berth with desperate haste.

Anything like the hardness of it, and the narrowness of it, he had never felt in the whole course of his experience. There was scarcely room to turn, certainly not to lie any way but perfectly straight. No comfortable rounding of the back, or tucking up of the legs was possible. An unyielding ledge of wood hemmed you in on either side. But all this was nothing in comparison with the terrible oscillations of the boat. High up one minute, low down the next, a see-saw was a joke to it. From the latter you could escape at your will, but here you were doomed to suffer twenty-seven long hours of misery before reaching the Norwegian coast.

Over and over again, as Harry lay there in his stuffy, ill-ventilated cabin—for all the port-holes were tightly screwed down—did he regret the rashness, the folly, the idiotcy which had prompted him to place himself in such a situation. To think, too, that he had been insane enough ever to look down with impatient contempt on the solid comforts of Bryanston Square. What would he not give now to be back again in the sombre dining-room, with its Turkey carpet, big leather chairs and handsome furniture, and to feel terra-firma once more under his feet? He thought of the good dinners he had eaten there. He did not believe he should ever survive to eat another, and the belief was infinitely distressing. How could it be otherwise? No more fried fish and kidneys, roast-beef and boiled mutton for him. He should moulder away at the bottom of the sea, food for the limpets and the lobsters. Oh why—why had he trusted himself to the bosom of the treacherous ocean? So reflected the unfortunate young man during the intervals, when he was capable of reflecting at all. Hours succeeded hour. Darkness turned to dawn, and every roll, every headlong plunge, every sudden stagger and heavy shock did but increase the misery of his sensations. The only thing that consoled him at all was to find that his neighbours fare

chains clanked, doors banged, and, judging from various sounds, plenty of them into the bargain.

It might have been somewhere about three or four a.m., when he heard a gruff, masculine voice in the cabin next to his own call out at the top of a pair of very stentorian lungs:

"I say, Mr. Finch, are you awake?"

The gentleman thus addressed made no reply. His placid features denoted that he, at least, was in the arms of Morpheus, and did not heed the weather. Harry envied him.

"Mr. Finch!" went on the same voice, if possible in a louder key, and speaking in accents of utter despair. "Oh! Mr. Finch this is aw—awful!"

Mr. Finch thus rudely roused from his slumbers, gave vent to a somewhat incoherent exclamation, not altogether unlike a oath.

"I *can not* get to sleep," said the first speaker with a hopelessly despondent emphasis on the "cannot!" "I've never had a wink all this blessed night. Oh, Lord! Oh, Lord!"

There followed a gurgle and a somewhat prolonged pause. "I fully think I shall—die. I n—n—never felt so bad in all my life. Catch me going to sea a—g—gain."

"Come, come! Cheer up!" murmured Mr. Finch, evidently not fully awake.

"It's no use. I can't. No f—fellow could when he is so internally sick."

"You'll be all the better for it afterwards."

"So they say, but I don't believe it."

"It clears the bile from the system."

"I—I'd rather keep it, Mr. Finch, than go through what you're doing."

"If you really feel so very bad, why don't you take a drop of something to drink?"

The advice was evidently extremely acceptable, and met with a great favour.

Upon my word, Mr. Finch, I think I will. There's nothing like a glass of hot whisky and water, mixed pretty stiff, to settle the stomach. If anything can do me good, I'm sure it will."

Whereupon, the electric bell was called into requisition, and kept ringing until the unfortunate steward, who had been on his legs nearly all night, and who had just lain down to try

and gain a few hours of well-earned repose, appeared in answer to the summons.

Somehow the unknown's abject bewailings, and the contrast between his great, loud, powerful voice, and his huge self-pity, had a beneficial effect upon Harry. Firstly, he could not help being amused by the episode, and, secondly, it occurred to him how very unmanly it was to bear what, after all, was only a temporary, though an extremely unpleasant discomfort, with so little patience and fortitude. He did not hear a single female voice complaining in that querulous and irritable manner, only male ones, and he felt ashamed to think how greatly delicate, fragile women, without half the physical strength, surpassed his own sex in their powers of passive endurance. He felt that a man well might profit from their example, and learn to conceal his small ailments a trifle better.

Towards morning he must have dozed off a little, though the sleep he obtained was restless and uneasy, ever haunted by that horrible swinging motion, and by the constant sound of rushing waters. Nevertheless, it helped to pass the time for when he looked at his watch, it wanted only a few minutes to seven o'clock. Three tremendous waves greeted him with a morning salute, and then followed a delicious but delusive lull. Fancying himself better, and buoyed up by resolution, Harry rose from his berth, and for a few seconds stood up right. Every feeling of discomfort immediately became intensified. The effort proved wholly disastrous, and caused him once more to retire precipitately between the sheets.

There he lay, quite flat on his back, having ascertained from painful experience, that he was more at ease in that position than in any other. For a long while, he did not even venture to turn round. His mind was haunted by the thought of ablutions; but they were quite out of the question. Cleanliness must go to the wall for once. He could make up for the omission later on when they got to land, if they ever did get to land, and were not shipwrecked instead.

About half past eight the steward, after first having visited Mr. Finch and his companion, the latter of whom, as a feeble joke, asked for the morning papers, came round to Harry's cabin, and politely inquired what he would take for breakfast. The poor boy, for all answer, only shook his head in disgust. The very thought of food was loathsome, and he felt as if he could not touch a morsel.

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The day wore on by degrees, but it appeared simply inter-  
minable. The weather did not improve, in fact, if anything,  
became worse, and the majority of the passengers suffered  
intensely. Harry envied Mr. Smutch with the scarlet fever.  
He would much rather have had half-a-dozen scarlet fevers  
upon the top of another than endure what he was endur-  
ing now. But towards nightfall he was cheered by the presence  
of a feminine visitor. Kind-hearted Mrs. Box, the stewardess,  
whose very name will conjure up pleasant memories to every  
traveller on Messrs. Wilson's line from Hull to Bergen, popped  
her head in at the door, and said in her frank and hearty  
manner:

"Well, young man, and how are you getting on?"

The "young man" murmured faintly that he was not get-  
ting on at all, but very much the reverse.

"Tut, tut! You must not give in like that. We can't allow  
such talk. Now, I'll be bound, from the looks of you, that  
you've had nothing to eat all day. Oh, don't tell me! I  
know." And she smoothed down the front of her apron, and  
seated herself by his side.

"But, Mrs. Box, I couldn't touch a morsel, indeed I couldn't.  
The very sight of food would upset me."

"Hoity toity! That's what you all say till you try. There's  
that poor little woman, Mrs. Berseker, in the deck cabin, who  
has been about as bad as bad could be. She vowed and  
declared she wanted nothing, not even a biscuit, but I insisted  
on her having some beef-tea, and now she feels as well  
again."

"I'm sure I shouldn't," protested Harry, "I'm differently  
constituted."

"Rubbish! You know nothing about it. How can you, if  
you refuse to make an effort? Now I'll tell you what I'll do.  
I just go away and bring back a little nice boiled fish or  
chicken, and stand over you and make you eat it, so there!"  
And she was as good as her word.

Harry swore at first that he could not taste a thing, but  
Mrs. Box laughed at him and bantered him to such an extent  
that at length, thanks mainly to her persuasion, he succeeded  
in demolishing the whole wing of a chicken, and to his surprise,  
that all the better for it, as he was fain gratefully to acknow-  
ledge. Mrs. Box gave one of her good-natured laughs.

"Come, that's all right!" she exclaimed. "I thought you  
were not quite so bad as you fancied. My experience is that

people seldom are. Take warning by that great big hulk of a man next door to you, who's been crying out and making such a shindy as never was, just because he has been a little sick. Poor Ben has been on his legs all night, dancing attendance upon him. I tell Ben he's far too patient. It don't do to humour the passengers too much, else they take advantage of your good-nature."

"Just as I am doing now, eh, Mrs. Box?" said Harry, with a smile of amusement.

"Yes, young man, just; but as long as you are alive to the fact, I don't so much mind. It's the folks that looks upon their fellow-creatures like so many beasts of burden who put my dander up."

"Do you think the weather is going to improve, Mrs. Box?" inquired Harry, anxiously.

"Oh, lor', yes! and, anyhow, you've got over the worst of it now. After Stavanger, we are protected by islands all the way. So you won't have it rough much longer."

Harry brightened up tremendously at this piece of news.

"It's been an awful night, and for the matter of that, day too," he said shudderingly.

"Well, it has been pretty bad, I'll admit, though I've seen many a worse passage, and I'm about tired out myself, but what with looking after this one, and looking after that one running here and running there, I'm just about wore out."

"You don't look it, Mrs. Box," said Harry, gazing at her substantial form.

"Ah! looks is deceptive. Once upon a time I was as slim as you are, but flesh and blood can't stand the work I've got to do; besides I'm not as young as I was, and I've told Mr. Wilson I've quite made up my mind that this shall be my last season. He'll have to look out for some one to fill my place. And Mrs. Box put on a resolute air, which seemed to say her resolve was final.

"He'll never find a person to do that," said Harry, complimentarily.

A mollified expression stole over the stewardess's face. Like most of her sex, she was not insensible to flattery, and as great as was her worth, she was fully aware of it.

"Ah! well, perhaps not, though I say it who should. But there, I can't stop here talking to you any longer. Number six's bell is ringing again. That woman seems to think people have nothing to do but run after her. Fussy, finnick



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ing! Roused me up at four o'clock this morning just to  
k what the time was."

Upon which Mrs. Box took her departure, leaving Harry  
greatly comforted both in body and mind. They were three  
ours late in reaching Stavanger, owing to the head wind with  
which they had to contend, and instead of arriving at that port  
half-past twelve o'clock on Wednesday night, at which time  
the steamer was due, they did not do so until half-past three  
Thursday morning. It was too early to turn out, and when  
the motion ceased, Harry got a few hours' sleep, in spite of the  
continuous working of the donkey engine and the trampling  
feet on deck. When he awoke they were in comparatively  
smooth water, and *The Colorado* had given over pitching and  
rolling.

He rose, dressed, and went on deck, anxious to have his  
first peep at Norwegian scenery. Although the wind had now  
considerably moderated, it still blew pretty fresh, but a warm,  
bright sun over head rendered the air delightfully exhilarating.  
In five minutes he felt a different creature.

They had taken a pilot on board previous to reaching  
Stavanger, and with the coast on her right, *The Colorado* was  
now wending her way through a whole host of low and barren  
lands, rocky, sterile, and nearly entirely destitute of habita-  
tions or vegetation.

Here and there, wherever a little grass patch appeared, it  
was almost pathetic to see with what care and industry it had  
been cultivated, and how immediately a cluster of small wooden  
cottages sprang up in the immediate vicinity. The waves  
flung their white spray up high, as they dashed against the  
grey boulders, many of which were rendered vivid in colouring  
by brilliant-hued lichen, that varied from the palest green to  
the most gorgeous yellow. A fringe of tawny seaweed showed  
where the tide reached highest, clinging in a straight line  
along the rock-bound coast. The blueness of the sky and the  
water, the clearness of the atmosphere, and the radiance of  
the sun, which reflected itself in glittering sparks on the  
crest of every wave, produced an indescribable buoyancy of  
spirits. Harry forgot his past sufferings. They faded from  
his recollection with a marvellous rapidity, so great was the  
reaction that now set in. Very soon, he climbed up to the  
upper deck, so as to obtain a still better and more extended  
view, and there, to his astonishment, he saw Mrs. Thompson  
chatting away merrily to the captain, and looking so fresh and



so rosy, that it was quite clear she, at least, had not felt any inconvenience from the severity of the passage. Now a man, especially when he has been very ill himself, cannot help admiring a woman under such circumstances. For once, he is prepared to admit her superiority, and she is exalted in his estimation almost to the rank of heroine. He advanced to meet her with a smile.

"Wel', this is a surprise to see you up and dressed so early in the day," he said as they shook hands.

"I might retort, that it occasions me still more surprise to see you up at all. I certainly did not expect it, after the lamentable account I received from Mrs. Box of your condition."

"Ah! Has Mrs. Box been telling tales? She would give me no sympathy in words, only in actions."

"And is not that the best sort of sympathy, Mr. Hopperton? It strikes me you are very hard to please."

"Perhaps I am. At any rate, I think we men like it better. Of course, I give the actions the preference, but the words are very pleasant, also."

"You want too much. As a woman I should be quite contented with the performances."

"I hope Mrs. Box took good care of you, Mrs. Thompson," said Harry.

"She would have, no doubt, had it been necessary, but fortunately for me I did not require her services, being a very lucky person, who does not know what it is to be seasick. The rougher it is the better I like it, as a rule, and the Captain will tell you with what admirable regularity I appeared at meals, and, moreover, what a voracious appetite I displayed."

She did indeed look as if she were thoroughly enjoying herself. The flush of health was on her cheek, and her eyes sparkled with animation.

The Captain thus appealed to gave a smile of confirmation. Like all sailors, he was fond of the fair sex, and a very popular man was he amongst his passengers, both male and female.

A certain frankness of manner and keenness of perception accompanied by a quick wit and a ready tongue, rendered him a most agreeable companion, and his society was always much appreciated by those on board. The only complaint they made was that they did not get half enough of it. For above everything he was a thorough seaman.

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kept placidly in their beds, or rather berths, he was ever on  
eck and on the alert. He thought nothing of his own comfort  
a comparison with the safety of his ship.

As he stood there smiling at Mrs. Thompson, his square,  
strongly-built figure, in its blue pilot coat and brass buttons,  
early defined against the brown cordage and the azure sky,  
he looked like one well calculated by Nature to protect those  
confided to his care. A sturdy, manly fellow, with bright,  
intelligent eyes, a fresh complexion, and a fair, auburn beard  
at beginning to be a little grizzled by the hand of Time.

"Yes," he said pleasantly, "I can vouch for the truth of  
his lady's statements. She has shown a brilliant example, not  
only to her own sex, but also to yours, and ought to have been  
a sailor, since she possesses every qualification necessary to  
earn the profession. And now I must go and tidy myself up  
a bit before breakfast, for my inward man tells me that it cannot  
be far off, and after being up all night I, for one, am quite  
ready for it."

Whereupon he departed, leaving Harry to take care of Mrs.  
Thompson, who so far was the only lady who had made her  
appearance.

"Where is your husband?" he inquired, more by way of  
something to say than for any very special interest he took in him.

"Ebenezer? Oh! poor Ebenezer has suffered most dread-  
fully, and though the sea is no longer at all rough, he vows he  
won't move from his cabin till we get to Bergen. He has  
had a terrible night of it, and feels so weak this morning that  
he declares it will take him several days to recover from  
the effects of the passage."

"Then you must let me look after you in his absence," said  
Harry gallantly, fetching a couple of camp stools and wrapping  
himself in a warm, Scotch plaid with tender solicitude round Mrs.  
Thompson's knees.

"No, no! I won't take it all, indeed I won't," she pro-  
tested. "You must leave a little corner for yourself."

And as she spoke she drew her stool a trifle nearer to his, so  
that the same rug might cover them both. Evidently she had  
not forgotten or forgiven the episode of the hand. Anyhow,  
it did not affect the amiability of her conduct, at which Harry  
rejoiced greatly, having feared that she might not be prepared  
to accept his subsequent advances.

He gladly did as he was told, though he insisted on giving  
the lion's share of the rug, and there these two foolish

young people sat, gazing into one another's eyes, taking an increasing pleasure in each other's society as they carried on a most animated conversation about a variety of different topics, and altogether looking extremely happy and lover-like.

In fact they did not seem a bit like strangers, but quite like old friends of long standing.

They discovered that they possessed the same tastes, the same wish for amusement, the same vague but magnificent expectations of life, though of the two Mrs. Thompson possibly took the soberer view, her brief experiences of matrimony having already flavoured her notions on things in general with a certain amount of cynicism, which contrasted strangely with her bright, young face, and quick, vivacious manner.

Perhaps it was just as well, on the whole, that Ebenezer remained in his cabin.

He might have been annoyed to see his pretty little wife talking away to a strange young man, whom she had happened to pick up on the journey, after a fashion that she had never done during their courtship.

His jealous disposition would have leapt into life at finding that she could smile at a casual companion as she had never smiled at him.

But he was safe below, with his tow-haired head and plain yellow face resting upon the pillow, wondering why the dickens Annie did not come to him to inquire what he would take for breakfast. She *must* know that he was ill, and that his appetite required coaxing. Surely she might have shown a little more consideration for him when he was so bad, and she herself was so horribly well. He resented the fact of suffering whilst she escaped scot free. It did not seem right or fitting, according to Ebenezer's way of thinking, for him to be feeling wretched whilst she was enjoying herself.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### FIRST GLIMPSES OF NORWEGIAN LIFE.

As the morning wore on, one by one the various passengers appeared, until the deck was more or less crowded with people, all eagerly straining their eyes to obtain a distant view of Bergen. When *The Colorado* neared her destination the eve-

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temment grew greater, especially amongst those whose first  
isit it was to Norway. For five or six hours they had con-  
nued to steer past barren grey islands, lifeless save for the  
a-birds that circled round them, and the scenery was growing  
monotonous.

At length between eleven and twelve o'clock, the red-roofed,  
aint, irregular houses of the town, with its different wharfs,  
d large white custom offices, became visible. A few minutes  
er the action of the screw grew slower and fainter, until  
ally it ceased altogether, and *The Colorado*, after having  
t given a hoarse signal from her funnel, brought up a  
ndred yards or so from the shore.

The scene was indeed picturesque to an English eye viewing  
or the first time.

The snug, shut-in harbour, studded with strange, brown-  
ed craft, and ships and steamers of various nationality, the  
wooden houses that encircled it on three sides, some high, some  
low, some large, some small, and all built without any attempt  
at architectural uniformity, their different colours, white, red,  
cream and yellow, their warm-toned tiles tempered by sun and  
wind and rain to a charmingly harmonious red, the tall spires  
of the churches, the rounded hills bathed in a blue mist, only  
a degree less blue than the sky and the water, the human  
habitations dotted half way up their slopes, the glimpses of  
green trees and grass, all combined to invest Bergen with  
a peculiar attraction. At all events, it appeared beautiful  
to indifferent sailors, who had been thirty-six long hours  
at sea, and who were prepared to welcome rapturously  
the ugliest spot on earth after the tossing of the mighty  
ocean.

Sooner did *The Colorado* come to a standstill than she  
was instantly besieged by a host of small, open boats, crowded  
with custom house officials, porters, and commissioners from  
the sundry hotels, who went about touting for their masters in  
search of customers.

A great babel of voices now arose in every direction. Nor-  
wegians speaking bad English, Englishmen speaking worse  
Norwegian, with the result that they were almost wholly unin-  
telligible to one another, and had to fall back on grotesque  
gulation. Greetings and recognitions took place amongst  
those who had met before. The simple Norseman looks upon  
Bull as a veritable mine of wealth, and consequently,  
welcomes him heartily, thinking of the "*mange penge*"

(much money) which, through his instrumentality, he hopes to accumulate.

Bags and rugs of every size and description are now brought up from the cabins, keys are grudgingly produced, and the gentlemen's luggage undergoes a strict search for tobacco and cigars. That of the ladies mostly escapes untouched. A basket travelling trunk is generally sacred, and subjected to no inspection.

At last a clearance began to be effected. Boat after boat pushed off with its burden of people and boxes. Then for the first time, it suddenly occurred to Harry to inquire where Mr. and Mrs. Thompson intended spending the night. The native "Dampskib" (steamboat) did not start for the Sogne Fjord until the following day, so that they, like himself, were bound to stop in Bergen.

He looked about him, and spied Ebenezer, whose first appearance it was, coming tottering up the hatchway, leaning heavily on his wife's arm. He might have been an invalid of many years' standing, judging from the care he appeared to deem it necessary to take of himself. Behind him followed Mrs. Box, laughing and joking at his inability to make the best of things.

"Come, come," she said. "You'll never make a man."

But to this observation he vouchsafed no reply. He considered it extremely impertinent, and muttered in his wife's ear, that Mrs. Box wanted keeping in her place—an observation which that lady, happening to overhear, treated with the utmost derision.

Harry at once advanced to meet him, and made polite inquiries after his health, in answer to which Mr. Thompson launched out at such length, and with so many circumstantial details, that he found it necessary to cut him short, or that he might have remained on board *The Colorado* all day.

"By the way," he said tentatively, "what hotel do you intend going to? We might as well go to the same one, especially as you are feeling so unwell. I could perhaps be of some service to you." And he looked at Mrs. Thompson, to see if any encouragement was to be gained from her.

"Mrs. Box has just been recommending us to go to Schatz. She says it is small, but very clean and comfortable, and that they feed you extremely well, which last consideration has quite decided Ebenezer to try it," said Mrs. Thompson, answering Harry's question instead of her husband.



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"In that case," he rejoined, "I shall most certainly accom-  
pany you, provided I am not intruding." And he glanced hesi-  
tatingly at Mr. Thompson.

"Oh dear no!" said the little woman briskly, before her  
better half had time to make any reply. "The more the  
merrier. Ebenezer and I are far too sensible a couple to shut  
ourselves up, and sit all day long in each other's pocket, just  
because we happen to have been married four weeks ago."

"Don't talk bosh," he said grumpily, evidently resenting his  
wife's pleasantry.

"I was going to Holtz's," said Harry, "but I quite agree  
with Mrs. Thompson in thinking that, as we are bound for the  
same destination, it's much jollier being together. So that's  
settled."

He spoke in a tone of authority, very unusual with him, but  
he experienced a strange reluctance to say good-bye to Mrs.  
Thompson, even for a short time. He thought it would be far  
easier going about Bergen in her company than all by himself,  
and for her sake he was even prepared to put up with the  
husband, though he felt an instinctive antipathy to the  
man.

Ebenezer said nothing, but it was quite plain the arrange-  
ment thus come to did not meet with his approval. His brows  
contracted in a frown, and his colourless eyebrows almost met  
over his small, sunken, glassy eyes. If he did not care about  
sticking in Annie's pocket himself, he saw no reason why any-  
body else should do so, especially such a young whipper-snapper  
as this Mr. Hopperton. However, it was no use making a fuss.  
If the fellow chose to go to Schatz's he could not very well  
prevent him.

A custom house officer attacked him at that moment, and  
he was forced to go with him and point out his luggage. Annie  
and Harry were left alone.

"I'm afraid Schatz's won't be half grand enough for you,  
Hopperton," she said quizzingly.

"And why not, pray?" he retorted. "Surely what's good  
enough for you is good enough for me."

"That remains to be seen. I fancy you like your comforts  
as well as most men."

"Is there any reason why I should not, when I can get  
them?"

"No, of course not. But as it appears we are now going  
to remain in each other's company for some little time, I may



as well be frank, and confess that we cannot afford to travel about *en grand Seigneur*."

"Neither can I, if it comes to that."

"I fancy you are better able to spend money right and left than we, who are forced to study economy. You don't mind my having told you this, do you?"

"No, certainly not. But it makes no difference to me. Whilst I am with you, I shall try and accommodate my ways to yours."

"It's very good of you to say so, Mr. Hopperton, but why make such a sacrifice, especially when it is an unnecessary one?" and she glanced at him brightly.

He reddened. Her manner had such a way of contradicting her words.

"I don't call it a sacrifice, Mrs. Thompson. To be in your society is a pleasure."

"That's extremely polite, and if I could believe the statement I should feel tremendously flattered. Anyhow, be warned in time. Our ways are not exactly pleasant ways. Ebenezer is crotchety. A bad dinner puts him out for the rest of the day, and I—I am not always good-tempered."

"I should have thought you had a first-rate temper," said Harry.

"No. Shams, and fusses, and stories make me simple wild." She did not say to whom she was alluding, but Harry could guess.

"So they do everybody," he said, stoutly.

"They ought not to, when it is your duty to take no notice of them," she responded, with a little sad shake of the head.

Then she added in a lighter tone, "Take my advice, Mr. Hopperton, and go to Holtz's."

"I mean to go where you go," he said obstinately. "I will not say another word."

Consequent upon this determination, he left *The Colon* with Mr. and Mrs. Thompson, having quite made up his mind not to lose sight of so pretty and charming a little woman if he could possibly help it. As for the husband, the only plan was to take no notice of him, and ignore his existence.

They were landed at a flight of slippery stone steps, which ran down into the harbour, and turning to the left, almost immediately found themselves in one of the main streets of the town. Here stood a white corner house, having "Scholar Hotel" written on it in large black letters.

None of the party had ever been inside a Norwegian dwelling before, and they were a little startled at the bareness of the wooden hall, in which stood a group of men, indulging in their favourite pastime of chewing tobacco. Mrs. Thompson gathered up her skirts with a shudder of disgust, and passed

Preceded by their landlord, they now ascended a steep and somewhat rickety staircase of ladder-like conformation, which was wholly destitute of carpeting. The rooms assigned to them wore an extremely cold and unfurnished appearance. They reminded one of an empty apartment, in which a few necessary articles had been temporarily placed, but certainly not of a comfortable English bedroom.

In each room stood a funny little, dark wooden bed, long enough for an under-sized man like Mr. Thompson, but abominably too short for anyone of decent growth. Harry, who was nearly six feet in height, wondered how he should ever accommodate his limbs. They were composed entirely of solid wood, and had ledges some four or five inches high of the same material on either side. They were coffin-like in the extreme. Over them was placed a feather quilt, with a gaudy, far from cleanly, chintz covering. The sheets were clean and made of coarse linen, but not an inch was allowed for tucking in. Both they and the quilt stretched exactly from the side of each ledge. The mattresses were primitive, being composed of loose straw thrust into long sacks, and, in addition to the usual pillow, there was a hard bolster, formed also of straw, some half-yard wide at the top and sloping down to a few inches at the base. For the rest, a small deal table, in the centre of which stood a glass water-bottle and tumbler on a plate flanked by a pair of brass candlesticks, a tiny washstand containing a lilliputian jug and basin, a couple of huckaback towels about the size of a doll's handkerchief, hanging by tape from a couple of rusty nails, and two dusty horsehair brushes, completed the inventory of each room. No; the modest one had a cracked looking-glass about six inches square, at an elevation on the wall which rendered it practically useless, a black stove that stood out about a yard, with an ugly chimney, which ran up to the ceiling, and a highly ornamental wash-basin filled with some sort of aromatic herb, not unlike lavender, and which emitted a pleasing but pungent odour.

Our friends stood and looked at each other in dismay. Mrs. Thompson was the first to speak.

"Why!" she exclaimed despondently, "there's not a ward-

robe, or a chest of drawers, or a place to put one's clothes. What are we to do? Clothes! clothes! why is every woman a slave to them?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said her husband. "I can't think what on earth Mrs. Box was about in recommending us to come to such a hole. She must have taken leave of her senses altogether. I shall catch my death of cold on these bare boards." And he gave an anticipatory sneeze.

"Well," said Harry as cheerfully as he could—he had been a little nettled by Mrs. Thompson's assumption that he could not do without his home luxuries, and was determined to show that she had misjudged him. "It's only for one night, and we had better make the best of it. If the worst comes to the worst we needn't unpack any of our things, except just those that are absolutely necessary."

Mr. Schatz's feelings were evidently deeply wounded by this outspoken disparagement of his apartments, and he here explained that all Norwegian bedrooms prepared for travellers were furnished in a similar manner. "It is de habit of de countree. We no 'ave carpets, cupboards here."

"Then," exclaimed Mrs. Thompson, briskly, "the very first thing I shall do will be to sally out and buy a hammer and some good strong brass-headed nails. In this way, at any rate we can convert the Sandéthal walls into a very fair substitute for a wardrobe."

Having at length decided to favour Mr. Schatz with the custom, they had only just time to settle down and to unpack the contents of their handbags when a bell resounding along the passage announced that dinner was ready. The dining-room was on the ground floor—a clean, bare, boarded room, containing nothing but a long table and a row of chairs. Mr. Schatz stood smiling at the door, and also a broad, good-natured looking girl, with flat features and a rosy face, clad in the national costume. She wore a dark serge skirt trimmed with straight bands of red, blue and yellow silk ribbon, underneath which peeped a pair of scarlet stockings and stout leather shoes. A kind of white Garibaldi body, made with white sleeves, was concealed from the waist upwards to within about eight inches of the neck by a bright scarlet Zouave, embroidered round the edge with gold and silver tinsel laid on green ribbon. It was laced across the front. On her head she placed a jaunty little silver cap made of curious filigree work, and her thick fair hair hung down in one long tail at the back.

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and was tied up by a coloured bow. Without having any pretensions to beauty, she was extremely picturesque in this attire, much more so than if she had aped modern fashions and appeared in an ill-fitting dress and an enormous improver. The contrast between the white linen, the scarlet jacket, and the dark skirt was altogether good.

After having admired this d.msel, our compatriots took their place at table.

"Faugh!" exclaimed Harry disdainfully, as he seated himself next Mrs. Thompson. "Just fancy dinner at this hour of the day! Why, it's only two o'clock."

She laughed.

"Oh! you must get rid of a few of your insular habits and prejudices, Mr. Hopperton, when you leave your own ineshably superior country and honour a benighted one like this with your presence. I see now that I was not wrong, and that I have been wedded to your comforts all your life."

He was excessively piqued by the observation. It was the second time it had been made.

"I fancy I can do without them as well as other people," Mrs. Thompson, when the necessity arises," he responded in grandest and stiffest manner.

She was not the least impressed by it, which was highly gratifying.

Perhaps so, but all the same you consider the necessity could never arise, and feel aggrieved if it does."

"I don't know what makes you say that."

Instinct, Mr. Hopperton, instinct. Now I, for one, not having been brought up with such exalted notions, am competent enough to like dining early, and at the present moment most tremendously hungry."

And so was Harry in reality, though his fastidious palate did not approve of several of the dishes, nor of the cooking; at which latter Ebenezer grumbled openly, totally disregarding the fact that he was now in Norway and not in Great Britain. For Mr. Schatz's sensibilities, who handed round each dish with an air of pride quite nice to witness—he was not supposed to have any. An Englishman on his travels forgets these things, and that human nature is human nature all over the

At last came a kind of fish pudding, prettily done in the shape of a real fish, with the scales and fins marked out almost as in nature. It was quite artistic to look at, but its appearance was its

best part. Inside was a queer compound of batter, egg and cinnamon, the spice quite overpowering every other flavour. It was tasted and left, much to Mr. Schatz's disappointment. Slices of salmon followed, and were decidedly better, though they too were spoilt by the seasoning. Next came tinned "Rypers" or ptarmigan, which really were most excellent, and junks of some kind of meat fried to a cinder in bad butter and onions, the grease swimming, clear and yellow, over a foundation of muddy gravy. Harry tried this dish out of curiosity but he could not make his teeth meet through the meat. It was dreadfully hard and tough, and to his notions possessed a most peculiar taste, as if it were tainted. The sweets, however, made up for all shortcomings. There was a beautiful pink raspberry sponge which met with Mrs. Thompson's special approval, and delicious custard, followed by pancakes as Norwegian cooks only know how to make them.

In short, by the time our compatriots rose from the table they were forced to admit that, although they missed the roast beef and mutton, the wants of nature were more than satisfied. Even Mr. Thompson revived a little after dinner and became a few degrees more amiable when he had been fed like the wild beasts at the Zoological Garden. It is strange how much man has in common with them. The afternoon was pleasantly enough in wandering about the streets of Bergen and in visiting the museum, fish-market, and Messrs. Brandt and Hammer's shops. At the former, Harry insisted on purchasing for Mrs. Thompson a beautiful fur boa, which she reluctantly accepted, and he quite won Ebenezer's good will for the remainder of the day by presenting him with a pair of splendidly warm shoes, made of reindeer skin and lined with fur, which he said he hoped would succeed in keeping out the cold of the bare boards.

They ascertained that the Sogne Fjord steamboat started at ten o'clock on the following day, and after having secured their places, they returned to the hotel. Here a substantial supper awaited them, during which meal Mr. Thompson's ire was roused almost to an exploding point by hearing a Norwegian lady opposite, tell her neighbour in broken English that the only decent eatable or drinkable thing in England was the beer, and as for their cooking it was simply horrid. He wanted to correct her views, but his wife, with some difficulty, succeeded in restraining him, and ultimately he became pacified by the conviction that the person in question—he refused to call



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dy—could only have visited very fourth and fifth rate hotels, such as he, Mr. Thompson, would never condescend to patronize. There was something soothing in this thought, which cooled his wrath. Otherwise the idea of a Norwegian daring to run down anything English was really too preposterous. After supper and a smoke, our friends retired to their rooms. But, in spite of their fatigue, none of them succeeded in getting much rest. The windows had no blinds of any sort, only stiffly latched white curtains, which did not shut out the light in the least. And it was light all night long. At half-past nine the moon was still shining, and the inhabitants of Bergen marched up and down the streets as if they had no thought of slumber. Vehicles of every description kept rumbling by, making a most tremendous clatter on the ill-paved stones.

All this, added to the strangeness and discomfort of the beds, and the persistent way the clothes rolled off at every turn, prevented our countrymen from getting any rest. When they rose, they felt quite jaded and unrefreshed, and they agreed unanimously next morning at breakfast, that however inferior England might be in culinary matters, her beds, at any rate, were infinitely superior to Scandinavian ones. So firmly was Harry of this belief, that in spite of Mrs. Thompson's bantering, he telegraphed straight off to Messrs. Maple to send him out a sized bed with best French spring mattress, blankets and sheets complete.

"You terrible young man!" said the little woman, shaking her head at him. "Can't you rough it even this tiny bit? Why, you are worse than Ebenezer."

"You forget that there is exactly a foot difference in height between us," retorted Harry, which argument was so unanswerable that she relapsed into silence. For in her heart was smouldering up an intense feeling of discontentment with her husband and master. Why was he so little, so ugly, and so horribly imperious? Harry Hopperton might have his foibles. He had been reared in luxury, and was somewhat too wedded to creature comforts to please her altogether. She could see his faults fast enough, though she recognized that they were mainly the result of his education. But, whatever they might be, he kept his temper in public, and always behaved like a gentleman, which was more than could be said of Ebenezer.

When a woman begins to make comparisons, it frequently proves a fatal thing for all parties concerned. It is so extremely difficult to tell where they will end.

## CHAPTER IX.

## STEAMING UP THE SOGNE FJORD.

By half-past nine next morning, Harry and the Thompson went on board the native steamboat, and were agreeably surprised to find how much larger and more commodious she was than they had anticipated. Although the two gentlemen agreed that the very sight of a steamer was hateful, after their recent experiences on *The Colorado*, they, nevertheless, came to the conclusion that it might be possible to support existence in the *Hjalta* if all motion were absent.

It appeared that, even thus early in the season, there was profitable traffic; for a number of passengers trooped down to the wharf, with truck-loads full of luggage, and the donkey engine was kept so constantly at work, seizing great sacks of flour, huge wooden cases, &c., and depositing them in the hold, that it was nearly twenty minutes after the appointed time before a start was actually made.

And now Harry undid the package of deck chairs which, on Mr. Smutch's recommendation, he had purchased at the Army and Navy Stores previous to starting. He placed one at Mr. Thompson's disposal, and they proceeded to instal themselves on the upper deck, in a sheltered corner out of the wind.

For the first few hours the scenery much resembled that between Stavanger and Bergen. Its character was the same, namely, wild, desolate and rocky, with very little verdure, and the grey outlines of the coast were clearly defined against the cloudless blue sky. But when they entered the Sogne Fjord, it grew grander and more imposing every minute, the scenery gaining in majesty and height.

They were again fortunate in the weather, which was everything that could be wished, and their first impressions of a Norwegian Fjord were made under favourable circumstances. The sun shone out with dazzling brilliancy, and lent a warm tinge to the surrounding landscape which made it appear peculiarly beautiful. The tall summits of the mountains stood out clear and sharp against their azure background. Every crag, every point and fantastic peak, was rendered visible by the strong and searching light which flooded them with a golden haze. The snow that lay on the topmost heights looked less white, as did also the milky water-falls, which came

FJORD.

and the Thompsons were agreeably surprised. The commodious shelter of the two gentlemen was hateful, after their long, nevertheless, campaign to support existence.

In the season, there was a heavy rain. The soldiers trooped down the beach, and the donkeys were seizing great sacks of grain, sitting them in the hold of the appointed time.

On the deck chairs which, purchased at the Army Store, He placed one at the stern, and intended to instal themselves out of the wind. The weather much resembled the character was the same. A very little verdure, a very little defined against the Sogne Fjord. Every minute, the

weather, which was even the first impressions of a favourable circumstances. The sun, and lent a warmth to the air which made it agreeable. The white cliffs of the mountains against the azure background. The bay, was rendered visible. The highest peaks looked like water-falls, which came

sliding down the bare surface of the rocks and precipices, now making some magnificent leap, which, in the sunlight, caused them to shine with the beautiful prismatic colours of a rainbow—anon losing themselves behind an avalanche of gigantic boulders, torn by main force from their natural resting-place by winter frosts and snows—then again peeping out amongst the sparse birch trees, in all their chaste whiteness, and finally, rolling with a dull roar into the green, transparent waters of the Fjord beneath.

In spite of the almost universal sterility and desolation of these huge, towering mountains, it was astonishing to see how grass and wild-flowers sprang up between cleft and crevice, and how the graceful, white-barked birch found a footing high on the steep slopes, often in places where the smallest stratum of soil rested on the rocky foundation. They looked as if a puff of wind must surely blow them away, and yet they lived there, green and flourishing, defying summer heat and winter storms.

Everywhere a great stillness prevailed, broken only by the roar of the water-falls, the hoarse cries of the long-winged sea-eagles, as they circled after the boat, the occasional tinkling of a sheep-bell, or bleating of some poor little kid, driven down from the "Sæter" and trying to gain a precarious livelihood among the fallen boulders, which offered so insecure a footing.

There was a peace, a freshness, a simplicity and solemnity about the landscape that sank deep into the soul, and seemed to appeal to the best part of a man's nature. The warm sun and crisp air rendered the charm still greater, and produced a potent effect upon the spirits.

Before long, the steamer slackened speed, and touched at a little hamlet. It consisted of about half-a-dozen wooden cottages, painted some red, some white, some yellow, nestling in a narrow valley that was scarcely more than a hundred yards wide, with high mountains on either side, and a dim blue haze of snow-crowned peaks immediately in its rear. In this little hamlet could be seen a few small plots of cultivated ground, the field being little more than a quarter of an acre in extent, surrounded by white palings, made of birchwood, used as a fence or so later on for hanging up the hay. Cocks and hens strutted contentedly about the doors; rough-coated dogs basked in the sunshine; a yellow cat stole, with noiseless tread, in quest of a melodious thrush, and an indefatigable corn-crake

kept up a perpetual croaking, his harsh note seeming to harmonize with the grandeur of his surroundings.

Near the landing stage stood several native carts and "stolkjærres," drawn by dun-coloured ponies with a dark stripe down their back, and flowing tails that literally swept the ground. Mild-eyed, hardy, rough little things that stood between thirteen and fourteen hands in height. The harness was simple to a degree. It consisted of a sort of wooden cross-bar that resembled a milk-maid's yoke, which was fastened to the horned wooden collar by two bands of leather, and was prevented from rubbing the ponies' withers by two flat, round pieces of wood on either side. From this cross-bar depended a couple of linked iron chains. The last of these links was inserted into an iron hole made for the purpose in the shafts and secured there by a wooden pin tied round by a bit of string. A crupper, a straight iron mouthpiece, and two old ropes for reins completed the arrangement. Traces, blinkers, brow and belly bands there were none.

A group of men, women, and children were collected on the wooden pier to watch the arrival of the steamer—their one excitement of the week. Kindly, honest, pleasant faces they had for the most part, but dull. There was a decided want of animation amongst them, and a look such as one sees in dumb cattle—a mute, patient, willing, submissive but untelligent look, probably the result of the primitive and hard working lives that they led, shut out from the outer world, and spending their days in the same never-ending round of monotonous toil. The consumption of tobacco was enormous. Every man either had a pipe in his mouth, or else chewed the fragrant weed, expectorating freely.

To the stranger, there was something wonderfully primitive and patriarchal about it all. It seemed to take him back hundreds and hundreds of years from civilization, with its trains, omnibuses, crowded cities, epicurean banquets, and midnight hours. Here you had man and nature; and the man and his human habitations seemed so small, nature so grand and majestic, in short, such an immeasurably superior and more enduring force, that it was almost awe-inspiring. With moraines and the evidences of glacial action all around, the spirit felt hushed and solemn, compelled to attune itself to the mighty workings of a remote and well-nigh unknown period.

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erry Princess at the coming of her lover, woke the sleeping valley into life. Her discordant hooting was the signal for an unwonted display of activity. Once more the creaky donkey-engine commenced its labours, landing sack after sack of flour, barrels and cases, whilst the fresh-complexioned people thronged round the vessel's sides, either welcoming friends who stepped out on to the pier, or else bidding last farewells to those who were about to depart. The latter were not troubled with much luggage. Their worldly possessions were generally done up in large cotton handkerchiefs, securely girt round with string, or else thrust loosely into a sack made of a piece of old matting or carpet. Here and there a woman appeared in the national dress, but they mostly wore dark skirts, pant bodies, and dingy handkerchiefs tied over their heads.

At length, the goods were all landed, and the steamer recommenced her journey, seeming, as she left a long line of black smoke in a legacy to the valley, like some sacrilegious thing, quite out of keeping with her surroundings. And yet, what a God-send she was to these far-off, isolated villages!

The scenery continued much the same as already described. Mountain succeeded mountain with almost oppressive monotony, and the green Fjord wound round the base of first one precipice then another. Sometimes they stopped at a single dwelling-place, where in most cases a rowing boat would put off from the shore, but more often the halting-stage was at a small cluster of red-roofed houses, that reminded one strangely of Noah's ark. But everywhere the same stillness prevailed, the same air of pastoral peace and seclusion, which was intensified by the grandeur and ruggedness of the landscape. That the sun to a great extent lent it its peculiar glory was evident, for when a passing cloud obscured Phœbus's bright rays for a few minutes, it was curious to see how instantly it faded hill and water of their gay tints, and left them cold, sombre and colourless. Then they conveyed a sense of gloom which fastened itself upon the spirit, and the great grey mountains frowning overhead acted like a leaden weight on the mind.

But the sun glided out again, reminding one of a merry elf playing at hide and seek, and lo! once more the shadows faded over the shoulders of the hills, by force of contrast, vividly illumining bright patches of yellow, and bringing every crack and hollow into prominence. The water resumed its wonderful green hue, and reflected with mirror-like fidelity



the zig-zag falls, the verdant banks, the silvery birch-trees, and the beetling crags overhead.

To Harry, who had never travelled further than Brighton and Ramsgate in his life, it was all so novel and so surpassingly beautiful, that he seemed suddenly transported into a new and different world—a world that exceeded every expectation formed. He could not refrain from ecstasies of admiration, in which Mrs. Thompson heartily joined. She too was young, and thoroughly enjoyed fresh scenes and absorbing impressions of an elevating nature, for she had a serious side to her character, which, although as yet not fully developed, frequently asserted itself over her more frivolous one.

She and Harry were extremely happy, for Mr. Thompson had struck up a friendship with an English gentleman and his wife, the former of whom proved to have a taste for butterflies. Such a bond of sympathy sufficed for the nonce to make Ebenezer forget his jealousy.

The lady, though no longer young, was still a very beautiful woman, dark and tall and statuesque, with finely shaped limbs and Juno-like eyes, large, deep and voluptuous. Mrs. Thompson was greatly taken by her appearance, and also by the extraordinarily stolid manner in which, whilst they were passing through the most glorious scenery, she kept her attention obstinately concentrated on a yellow-backed novel. The husband—who, for a husband, was most attentive and devoted—had evidently an appreciative eye for the beauties of Nature. Once or twice he called upon his spouse to admire them, but without success. She turned a deaf ear to all his ejaculations of delight. Apparently they produced an irritating effect on the fair reader.

At last, as the steamer went close under the lee of an enormous precipice, which rose almost perpendicularly some four thousand feet high from the water's edge, and which was sublime in its awful solemnity, seeming to threaten that it would topple over at any moment, and crush into a thousand atoms the tiny lives beneath it, he could contain himself no longer.

"Look, my darling, do look," he cried ecstatically. "You really must. It's quite worth your while."

She just lifted her beautiful, sleepy eyes from the page on which they rested, and not a muscle moved in her lovely, inanimate face. Only when he touched her, she drew back.

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"What am I to look at?" she asked indifferently.

"At this splendid precipice," he said with enthusiasm. Just see, my love, what a height it is."

She glanced at it in the most casual manner. Then she said contemptuously, "I really don't see what there is to make such a fuss about. Lots of things are high."

He sighed, and, unable to control his mortification, turned away. He had married beauty, but not sympathy or understanding; and she—annoyed by the interruption, returned with redoubled zest to Miss Braddon.

"Do you know what I should do, if I were married to a woman like that?" whispered bright little Mrs. Thompson in Harry's ear.

"No, what?" he responded with an amused smile.

"First and foremost, I should feel inclined to strangle her, but as that is not allowable, I would shake the very life out of her, just so as to try and add a little extra animation. It's dreadful to be so insensible to beautiful things, and when you are beautiful yourself, as she is, it makes it a thousand times worse."

Harry laughed. Her vehemence afforded him intense amusement.

"I don't quite agree with you there, Mrs. Thompson. It always seems to me that brains and beauty together are a very unfair combination. The plain-headed women would have no chance at all at that rate."

"Well," she replied, "for my part I would sooner marry the ugliest woman in creation than be linked for life to a mere mass of flesh and blood like our friend opposite. She would bore me to death."

"Ah!" said Harry significantly, "everybody is not as fortunate as Mr. Thompson."

The colour flew to her cheeks.

"Don't talk nonsense," she said pettishly, though she was by no means so ill-pleased as she tried to appear.

"I'm not talking nonsense. I'm only saying what I think."

"Then it is a great pity your brains are not occupied by some more profitable thought; and since you have quoted Mr. Thompson, take example by him." And her voice assumed a tone of bitterness.

"Certainly, if you will tell me in what way." He did not mean to be sarcastic, but she evidently put an ironical construction upon the speech.

"Ah! you think it difficult. Nevertheless you can derive a salutary lesson from my husband's conduct. He has not been married very long, but he has been married long enough to prove to you that he does not consider himself specially fortunate in the possession of his wife."

"And do you consider yourself so, Mrs. Thompson?"

Some indefinable impulse prompted him to ask the question, although it was one which he felt she might with good cause resent. But she was too young to have learnt the art of deception in all its bearings.

"No," she said simply, "but that is a different thing altogether. I never expected to be happy when I married. Ebenezer did, and consequently I am sorry for him. He has soon got disillusioned."

It was on the tip of Harry's tongue to say, "Then what the deuce did you marry him for?" But he thought better of it and refrained from making any further inquiries of a painful and indiscreet nature. And yet he was dying to know. The more he saw of Mrs. Thompson, the more was he puzzled what could have made her take Ebenezer. That she did not like him and never had, he was quite convinced. The knowledge gave him pleasure. This was not right, quite the reverse, in fact. A pang of self-condemnation wounded his sensitive conscience. Mrs. Thompson was a married woman.

It was a dreadful pity, but nothing could alter the unfortunate fact. He had made her acquaintance exactly four weeks and two days too late. What was to be done?

Was he to follow Mr. Smutch's advice, and run away with his neighbour's wife? No, certainly not. Honour and principle shrank back in horror from the mere contemplation of so unrighteous an action. He had been well brought up, and knew his Bible by heart. His morality was irreproachable. He would not offend against Mr. Thompson in any way. Far from it. Therefore he would content himself with falling in love with his wife, and letting "green and yellow melancholy feed upon his damask cheek." But—horrible, yet not altogether unpleasing thought! What, oh! What if it were to make ravages on her smooth epidermis as well? He began to think that his passion—for, of course, he thought it *was* a passion—was not altogether unreturned, and he was magnanimous enough not to wish to blight the poor, dear, little woman's life. That would be a horrid shame.

## CHAPTER X.

## EBENEZER COMPLAINS OF NOT BEING PROPERLY FED.

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ay, "Then what the thought better of it, and the inquiries of a painful nature, trying to know. The fact was he puzzled what she did not like. The knowledge was quite the reverse, in fact, and founded his sensitive nature on a married woman.

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and run away with honour and principle, and contemplation of so unbecoming a thing brought up, and knew it was irreproachable. He was in any way. For himself with falling in and yellow melancholy, but not altogether able, yet not altogether able to make it if it were to make it? He began to think it was a passion—was magnanimous, and little woman's life

HARRY's meditations were interrupted by the bell for dinner, and in a few minutes all the first-class passengers were assembled round the table in the saloon. They were rather a motley crew, and consisted of three Englishmen with short, fair hair, bare throats, and flannel shirts, half-a-dozen Norwegians accompanied by their wide-backed, broad-hipped, and high cheek-boned wives, a party of five young English girls sitting about entirely alone, and disdaining all chaperonage, and a cadaverous-looking American with his better-half, both of whom for the last six years had travelled unceasingly, and visited every known portion of the habitable world. These latter were chatty, intelligent people, who made quaint remarks about everything they saw in loud nasal accents.

The five girls had already attracted a considerable amount of attention amongst their fellow-travellers. Without being particularly pretty, they were all of them nice-looking, and in age about from eighteen to four or five and twenty. Yet a man must have been an exceptionally bold and determined fellow to fall in love with any one of the quintet. This may sound strange, but the reason was obvious enough. The fact was, they were all so curiously alike, that the individual young woman completely lost her identity. She was merely one of many. The whole five were dressed in light sand-coloured Norfolk jackets with skirts to match. Each wore a stalking-horse of the same shade. None were taller nor shorter than the rest. They were all exactly of a size, and as they sat in a row opposite to the Thompson party, they reminded one of the little sparrows pecking away at their food, and pluming themselves in the sunshine.

But as to admiring one sparrow more than another, or distinguishing it by any particular preference, why, the thing was simply impossible, and forcibly demonstrated the truth of the adage, that there is safety in numbers. Moreover, it had already been whispered on board, that before leaving home they had made a most solemn promise to hold no intercourse whatever with any man who was not married.

The three young Englishmen had already endeavoured to make their acquaintance, and been so snubily treated that

they declared they were the rudest girls they had ever seen in their lives.

"What do you think of the five little maids from school?" whispered Mrs. Thompson mischievously in Harry's ear. "They're awfully proper and well-behaved, aren't they?"

"Uncommonly so," he responded. "They look as if butter would not melt in their mouths."

"They appear to be terribly dull," went on Mrs. Thompson in the same key. "I wish to goodness some enterprising man would cheer the poor things up a bit. Women never seem to enjoy themselves somehow, when they are alone, however much they may try and make believe that they do."

"Is that your experience, Mrs. Thompson?"

"Yes, most certainly. I think the world would be a frightfully stagnant place if it weren't for the men. But come, which of those five trusting lambs have you lost your heart to?"

"To none. I have lost it already." And he looked sentimentally at his companion.

"Indeed! You don't say so?"

"Yes, you know to whom."

"Upon my word, Mr. Hopperton, that valuable organ you call your heart can't be worth much, if it passes out of you keeping on such very slight provocation. You should look after it better, or some of these days it will be getting you in trouble."

He did not altogether like her tone, and was going to make some spirited reply, when his attention was diverted by having a plate of soup popped down before him, which, owing to the rough handling of the steward, threatened to swash over on his trousers. And they were a favourite pair, for which he had conceived a liking.

The fluid he now essayed to take was a curious mixture of water, grease, raw lumps of onion and uncooked macaroni. Mr. Thompson, who was very particular as to his food, and moreover, had the misfortune to possess a liver which occasionally occasioned him much trouble and anxiety, simply tasted it, and then laid down his spoon with a grimace.

"How can you eat that stuff?" he growled to Harry. "I would not give such muck to our pigs at home; but the foreigners seem to have no palates and no digestions."

"It's not very good soup, certainly," said Harry in reply. "However, I'm too hungry to be dainty, and the air on deck has made me simply ravenous."



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salmon followed, as a matter of course. When people go Norway, they may as well make up their minds to more or less living on that article of food. Mr. Thompson managed to get a little, although he disapproved of the manner in which it was cooked. But the next course he foolishly passed over altogether, thinking that some more tempting dish was certain to succeed it. He forgot that he had come to a land where *cakes* are almost unknown, and to his consternation discovered too late that the beef steak fried in onion and bad butter, which he had burnt to a cinder, at which he had turned up his nose, was the only *pièce de résistance*, and those who did not like it must do without.

Whilst he was still cherishing a lingering hope that some more and more delectable viand might be forthcoming, a kind of ornamental cake, smelling strongly of rum, was handed round, and so ended the meal.

Mr. Thompson uttered an oath that was meant to be suppressed, but which the distress of his feelings rendered audible to the general company. He vowed that he was starving, and rose from the table in an execrable humour, which he vented on his wife, and which lasted the whole of the afternoon. Harry felt a burning desire to punch his head, and so put an end to his absurd grumbling.

Unfortunately, supper, which was served at half-past seven o'clock, did not tend to increase Ebenezer's equanimity. One thing at the board was enough. Four different sorts of cheese were the most conspicuous objects that caught the eye. They were ranged in a straight line down the centre of the table, and presented a very imposing appearance. Only one needed to be tried of this special dainty.

First came the cheese of the country, "Gammelost," which, in consideration for the delicate olfactory organs of the foreigners present, was placed under a glass cover—an act of civility for which they felt truly grateful. Secondly, "Myseost," a compound of goat's milk, brown to the eye and sweet to the taste, but far from palatable. Thirdly, a hunch of Swiss Gruyère, and fourthly, a round Dutch cheese, as hard as a bullet.

Around them was placed a variety of funny little plates, containing slices of raw, dried salmon, tinned tongue cut like sauerkraut, sardines, and peculiarly smoky-flavoured sausage, which met with much favour among the natives. The prospect of a substantial meal were not promising. A fine, large

dish of boiled eggs, however, revived the drooping spirits of our compatriots. Boiled eggs were boiled eggs all over the world. So they imagined. But alas! a horrible taste of straw rendered them quite uneatable. *They were not fresh.* Mr. Thompson thought he would have swooned. To make matters worse, the bread was indifferent in the extreme, though to be sure you had your choice of three sorts, very brown and very sour, rather brown and rather sour, scarcely brown and scarcely sour, yet differing widely from a real good crusty loaf.

Needless to say, the English people all took the latter though they quarrelled desperately with the butter, which was soft, salt, greasy, and slightly rancid. But then, what do they come abroad for if they get put out at finding the fare and customs of every other country not exactly similiar to their own? They had much better stay at home, where they can get all the luxuries to which they are accustomed, and of which they are the bounden slaves. It is one thing to possess a sense of the ridiculous which brings prominently before your notice the sundry little inconveniences incidental to foreign travel, but it is quite another thing to lose one's temper over them, and make yourself and the people who have the misfortune to be with you miserable. Be prepared to eat—or leave—bad butter, sour bread, tough meat; or else spend all your days in your own particular little portion of the globe, convinced that it is superior in every way to those countries which you have never visited, and therefore know nothing about.

Mr. Thompson had seldom gone abroad, and was thoroughly bad traveller. The least thing upset his liver, his digestion, and his temper. The latter was the most sensitive of the three, and the most subject to fluctuation. He vented his displeasure in audible tones, and with a fine contempt for the feelings of the Norwegian gentlemen and ladies present, several of whom, although they did not speak it very fluently, understood English, and exchanged smiles of silent amusement.

Harry did not relish his evening meal much more than Ebenezer, but he was gentleman enough to hold his tongue, or at any rate, to express his disapprobation *sotto-voce*.

And after all, what did it matter?

Were they any the worse because they had eaten and drunk less than usual, felt rather lighter about the region of the stomach, and consequently clearer in that of the head? No, it was their health seriously affected, because for once in their

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curious lives they had had to do without a late dinner—their  
op, fish, *entrée*, joint, sweet, savoury and accompanying  
e? Not they. None the worse in any way, saving only  
good humour, and a most absurd and insular sense of ill-  
ge. Granted that they had had to put up with some few  
privations in the way of food. Were they not more than  
ed for by those glittering snow-topped peaks, which the  
ing sun was just beginning to irradiate with rosy gleams—  
the quiet water, so clear and pure that it seemed to shame  
turbid and material thoughts—by the grand vista of moun-  
succeeding mountain in ever changing variety of form  
outline, by the faint crescent moon, hanging like a silver  
in the Heavens, and above all, by the still serenity of  
ure, and the mysterious heart-stirrings produced by her  
esty and beauty? What is a beef steak or a mutton  
p in comparison? Dinner? Yes.

Dinner is undoubtedly good in its way; but ye who cannot  
appreciate the infinite superiority of such things as these, over  
the flesh and fowl, who are in short bondsmen to your petty,  
y comforts, had far better follow the excellent Mr. Bous-  
fi's example, and having no enterprise, no ambition, no spirit  
of adventure in you, toddle up and down Bond Street and  
Port Mall every day of your lives. Stick to your clubs, your  
cooks, your quails, truffles, and "Brut" champagne. Ye  
swine (only it does not do to call you so) fit but to stay  
at home, with your own particular pig-sty over your heads.

Barry and Mrs. Thompson remained on deck until long  
after the sun had gone down. They saw the Heavens illumi-  
nated by a brilliant after glow, and the hill-tops catch the  
in reflection, until their snow-crowned summits flushed  
red, like a virgin in response to her lover's embraces, and  
the polished agate-like surface of the waters beneath were all  
one, except where some great mountain shut out the light,  
cast down its long, black, silent shadow in some contrast  
to the luminous clouds above.

They saw the rich roseate tints die slowly away, as if reluc-  
tantly to bid farewell to the bright and beautiful day, whose  
down they heralded, and a tender yellow take their place in  
the darkening sky, which again softened and dissolved into a  
bluish green, whose pureness and transparency of colour  
no brush can ever succeed in rendering. Then the moon  
rose up aloft, and became whiter and more distinct, and the  
ling star tried to twinkle in spite of the lingering twilight

which, at eleven o'clock at night, made it still seem like softened day from which the glare and the heat had departed whilst the towering hills stood out blackly purple against the line of light left as a farewell memento by the sunken sun. The sound of many waters filled their ears with a soothing lullaby. Nothing broke the stillness, save the occasional cry of a sea-gull, or the weird whistle of a jack-snipe.

The two young people, thrown together by the accidents of travel, and by a certain similarity of thought and feeling, sat and watched this glorious transformation scene in almost absolute silence. They seemed mutually to realize that the small talk was out of place, and that they were in the presence of some infinitely great and noble Power.

All at once Harry's love of a day appeared to him a poor weak thing—a passion unworthy of the name, and Mrs. Thompson, a bride of little more than four weeks' standing, but one who had already experienced many shocks and disappointments, murmured to herself, as her eyes filled with tears—"What does it signify? What does it signify? The joys and sorrows of human beings count for nothing in comparison with such forces as these. It is only our littleness and pettiness of spirit that exalts them into undue importance."

With her senses tranquillized, and, after a fashion, drugged by the sweet spirit of the night, she at length reluctantly went below, and retired to the ladies' cabin.

Heavens! What a change was here! Every elevated and exalted thought fled as she entered. Ten full-grown women in a space of about as many feet. A line of berths, one over the other, all occupied except her own, every port-hole hermetically closed, an atmosphere that—what between oil lamps, feeding bottles, sour milk, bilge water, and a fine aroma of native Norsk—can be more easily imagined than described, and last, but not least, a couple of fractious babies, who, to the general discomfort of the passengers, kept up a fiendish noise. The Black Hole of Calcutta was a joke in comparison.

Poor little Mrs. Thompson shrank back aghast at the sight and at the fetid smell that assailed her nostrils. They were the more sensitive, coming so directly from the cool, fresh evening air. Her courage sank to Zero. She felt as if she *never*, NEVER could pass the night in this terrible place. But with a heroic effort she controlled her disgust. It would not do for her—who so scorned Mr. Thompson's fussings and loss of temper, who laughed at his fastidiousness and inability to

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...up with things, to prove herself as weak as he. No, she  
...uld rather die than do that, so great was her contempt for  
...character.

Without giving herself time to alter her determination, she  
...bled off her clothes—there was not a peg on which to hang  
...her dress even—and folded them as neatly as she could at  
...foot of her berth. Her movements, however, were im-  
...led by the mother of the infants, who was walking up and  
...wn the narrow cabin, with the most obnoxious one in her  
...ns, trying to hush it to sleep. The conviction also that  
...eral pairs of Norwegian eyes were fixed upon her, curious  
...ake in every detail of an Englishwoman's attire, had rather  
...disturbing effect. She had a mass of pretty, soft, brown  
...r which she usually wore in thick plaits at the back of her  
...d. It was the first night in her life that she had ever gone  
...bed without brushing it, but she could not summon up  
...ficient resolution to unbraid her abundant locks, knowing  
...t the process would entail elbow-room, and take quite a  
...arter of an hour. And in a quarter of an hour she might  
...nt or do something foolish, so horribly close was the atmo-  
...here.

Consequently, she proceeded to scramble into her berth as  
...t as she possibly could, and slurred over all exigencies of  
...lette, except those that were absolutely indispensable. For-  
...nately she had taken the precaution to secure a berth on the  
...omost tier, which also commanded a port-hole. This, after  
...considerable amount of fumbling, she succeeded in unscrew-  
...g, and felt a little easier in her mind, when the fresh air came  
...uring in. But the mother looked daggers at her. However  
...e was growing callous by this time, and alive to the fact that  
...en you are jostled up with so many of your fellow-creatures,  
...soon becomes a case of every man for himself. The weak-  
...t go to the wall, and having once secured possession of that  
...ort-hole, she would not have yielded it without a battle royal.  
...was hers, to do what she liked with. Other people might  
...ep theirs shut if they wished. She chose to keep her own  
...dividual one open. A thick worsted shawl was wrapped  
...und the precious baby, who howled louder than ever in  
...ognition of its mother's anxious care, and Mrs. Thompson  
...ontinued triumphant.

But she had another bad moment before very long. It  
...as, if possible, a worse one.

The broad, good-natured stewardess appeared with her



blankets, and it then appeared that there were no top sheets to the berths!!

She did not dare look at these blankets, for, to begin with they were odoriferous in the extreme, and instinct told her they were dirty. It made her quite ill to think how many sorts and conditions of men had slept in them already. The thought was so loathsome, that she trembled to dwell upon it and yet it would obtrude.

She lay very still. An incautious turn meant the total loss of every covering. Sleep was out of the question. The noise of the screw, the sound of footsteps and voices on deck, the strangeness and discomfort of the situation, effectually precluded slumber, added to a lamp kept burning, and the sweet harmony of the small couple.

Ten minutes might have gone by thus. She began to hope that her fears were possibly exaggerated, then—oh! horror! she felt something crawling slowly, slowly up her leg.

It might have been only fancy. Anyhow she resolved to treat it as such. A delusive interval of repose convinced her it was imagination, when, lo—there the odious and horrible sensation came again, scrubby, ticklish, and unmistakable. For her sins, too, she had a tender skin. . . .

Over her sufferings of that night we draw a veil. It would be unkind to the reader to harrow his feelings by describing them in detail. Suffice it, they were such as to leave a very lively impression on Mrs. Thompson's mind, and when Ebenezer, on his return to England, recounted all he had undergone on board the native "Dampskib," and how he had been nearly starved, instead of laughing at him, she sat still, and gave shuddering confirmation to his words.

And yet everything passes.

A bad dinner goes, and is forgotten, and even a miserable night comes to an end in due course. Otherwise our trip abroad would often prove more of a pain than a pleasure. But there is an elasticity in the human organization which throws off minor discomforts, and which, when once they have passed away, renders the remembrance of them a positive source of satisfaction. If it were not for what we had endured we should not retain half so distinct a recollection of a good many things. We are more apt to forget that we have had an excellent meal, than that we have been forced to do without one, and, at any rate, our hardships prove a fertile source of conversation when we safely reach the haven of our home.

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extended experience, even although it may not always be agreeable one, means more knowledge, and few of us possess so much, that we cannot profit by an increase.

## CHAPTER XI.

### SANDETHAL AT LAST.

It was a scramble as it was next morning to get up and dress, with only one little jug full of water, and basin to satisfy the wants of the whole party, and scarcely room to stand with any comfort. Fortunately, the Norwegian ladies made but very little demand upon the supply, else Annie Thompson thought it would have been simply impossible for everybody to be ready in time for an eight-o'clock breakfast.

Annie issued from the ladies' cabin weary and unrefreshed, with a dark impression stamped upon her brain, but the fresh air on deck, which, at this early hour in the morning was cool and bracing, soon made her feel more like herself again. The horrors of the night faded, and lost their acuteness.

Before long, the stewardess appeared bearing a tray laden with cups and saucers. She poured Annie out a cup of delicious hot coffee, whose aroma had for some little time been striking her nostrils. It proved highly welcome, as did also the crisp, brown rusks that accompanied it, for although breakfast was said to be at eight, it soon proved merely a nominal

Annie now became acquainted with the fact that the saloon in which they took their meals was turned into a cabin for the seamen to sleep in at night. Consequently, unless they were early birds, a considerable delay occurred in getting their things put away, and the table laid out.

Neither her husband nor Harry appeared for some time, but Mrs. Thompson sat alone for quite half an hour enjoying the beauty and novelty of the scene, for, as the steamer advanced further up the Fjord, the landscape assumed a still more rugged aspect. The mountains towered upon either side between four and five thousand feet high; their summits were wrapped more deeply round with snow, which lay in patches at what seemed quite a low elevation in comparison with the heights that soared above them, and whose

varied outlines, mostly rounded, but here and there assuming jagged shapes and prominences, encroached upon the soft sky overhead. The valleys were narrow, and shut in as by prison walls; also they became less frequent, in this grand but sterile wilderness of mighty precipices, grey rocks, and thundering waterfalls. The signs of human habitation grew scarcer and scarcer. The verdure vanished, there was hardly a tree to be seen; only here and there in some sheltered spot, a few blades of coarse grass or a hardy wild-flower relieved the eye by a little touch of green. It was sombre and oppressive to a degree, and the loneliness and desolation of the neighbourhood required to be seen to be realized. Here, Nature seemed to have disdained the gentler arts by which she ordinarily pleases. Rock was hurled upon rock, with a giant hand. Whole avalanches of stone had accumulated at the base of the dark frowning bluffs, that rose so straight from the water's edge. Occasionally a noise as of thunder, only louder and more protracted, woke up the echoes, when some great boulder, losing its balance through an invisible cause, came rolling, leaping, smashing down, and flung itself wildly into the Fjord, leaving a long line of dust, sand, and rubble in its wake.

Although the sun shone, the day was neither so fine nor yet so warm as its predecessor, and threatened to become overcast later on. Heavy grey clouds lay sullenly on the hill sides, looking like great masses of smoke, and producing wonderful atmospheric effects, as the tall white peaks soared far above them, their barren slopes lit up by glints of sunshine, that decked them with brilliant light, only to leave them a moment afterwards in deepest shadow. They wore now a different aspect from the previous day, when they had been bathed from top to base in an exquisite blue haze, which softened, though it did not conceal their outlines, and which seemed to melt imperceptibly into the Fjord below, and the sky above, until the eye became almost satiated with so many charming gradations of pure ultramarine. To-day they were gloomy, threatening, awe-inspiring, but if possible even more striking and majestic, than in their gayer colouring.

The *Fjalia* still steamed on, on, on, at a slow but steady pace; making occasional stoppages, now turning round some sharp corner that looked, until you came close upon it, as if it must surely be the head of the Fjord, anon steering to the right, again to the left, through what appeared to the uninitiated an interminable maze of watery thoroughfares, each one

so like another that it was well-nigh impossible to distinguish them apart. At least so it seemed to Annie, who, in spite of an excellent map of Norway, purchased at Mr. Beyer's celebrated shop in Bergen, where travellers are ever sure of the kindest and most courteous treatment, from the admirable proprietor—got hopelessly bewildered in trying to seek out the route.

About ten o'clock they came to a village that was evidently a place of considerable importance, since it possessed a large store, some dozen superior-looking houses, an hotel with a pretentious balcony, a church built of wood and painted white, having a red-tiled roof and a brass ball on its spire, and last, but not least, a decent road. Here were collected a large drove of native ponies that had been driven down from the mountains, and were destined for Christiania, *viâ* Aurland. On seeing their number, the captain had the kindly forethought to send word to the passengers that there would be a halt of an hour, so that if they liked to go on shore and stretch their legs, they might.

Time, on these journeys, is apparently of little or no importance. Everything is conducted in a leisurely and careful manner, and if the boat is two or three hours late—as is often the case—she does not attempt to make up for lost ground. And the long, light nights really render it of very little importance when you arrive at your destination. The hooting of the steam whistle is always the signal for the headmen of each village to wake from their slumbers, huddle on their clothes and hurry down to the landing-stage. By some remarkable coincidence too, whenever you want to get to a place, or leave a place, the time for starting is nearly invariably somewhere about three or four a.m.

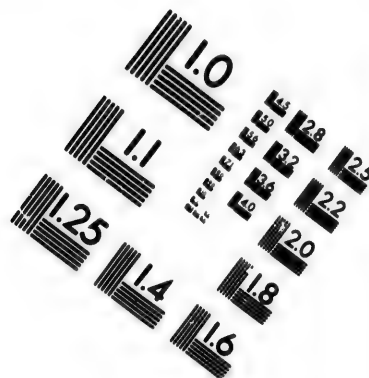
Glad of a change, most of the passengers now went on shore. Harry and the Thompsons followed the general example and stood on the pier—which was unusually thronged—in order to have a look at the ponies.

They were a rough, shaggy lot, with bristly manes that stood straight up, and tails which in many cases literally swept the ground. The prevailing colour was a light dun, though there were also many creams and bays and a few chestnuts. Browns, blacks and greys were conspicuous chiefly by their absence.

Hardy, placid-tempered little creatures they seemed as they stood there, some hundred all told, huddled together in a small

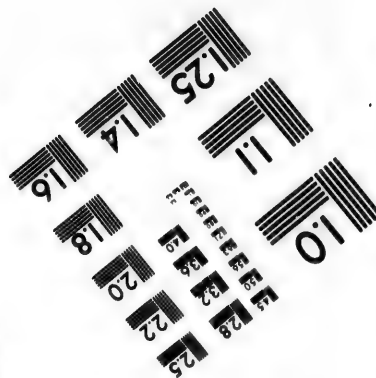
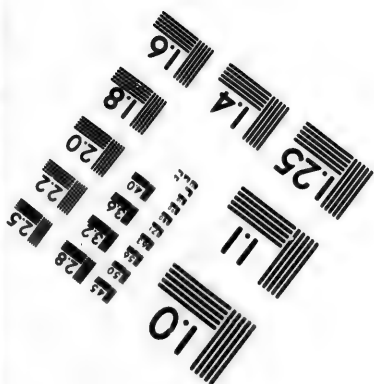






Resolution test chart showing patterns of vertical and horizontal lines with numerical values ranging from 1.0 to 4.0.

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space, pushed and shoved in every direction by the crowd and by one another, yet never displaying the least tendency to vice, as an English drove of ponies would most assuredly have done under similar circumstances. Wonderfully sensible, too, they were when spoken to, appearing more like human beings in point of intelligence, than mere dumb animals.

Many of them, if properly groomed and cared for, would have been quite pretty, but dandy brushes and chamois leathers were to them things unknown. Sun, and wind, and rain alike beat upon their scurfy coats. Nearly all had good sound feet and legs. That was one of the characteristics that distinguished them, also small heads, and mild, prominent eyes, but in some instances, exception might have been taken to their shoulders, which were inclined to be a little straight and loaded.

They ranged much about the same size; namely, between thirteen and fourteen hands high. Some few looked fat and well, as if their dispositions were such that nothing could prevent them from thriving; but others—and they were in the majority—were extremely miserable in condition, and cropped eagerly at the grass on the road-side as they stood and waited their turn for embarkation.

It was an interesting sight to see the poor, little, bewildered creatures, after first having two broad bands securely placed under their bodies, seized by the nimble donkey-engine, raised high up aloft, and then popped down into the hold, with a care and precision almost human.

Last of all came the Lord of the Harem, who proclaimed his disapproval of the proceedings, by sundry snorts and whinnies, and by an angry striking out of his fore feet. He was a beautiful fellow, bright bay in colour, with black points, a spirited eye, small tapering head, and a tremendous crest. Two attendants had been told off to wait upon his lordship, and he now afforded them considerable trouble. Alarmed by so many unusual sights and sounds, by the throng of people who pressed around him, and above all by the steam that issued from the ship's boiler, it was not until the third attempt that he was raised aloft, struggling desperately, and safely secured in a corner by himself. His angry squeals of defiance showed how deeply he resented the indignity to which he had just been subjected.

When all the ponies were on board, cargo delivered and taken in, the stout rope was loosed from the post which held

the *Fjalia* to the landing-stage, and once more she went on her way.

Hour now succeeded hour in placid monotony. No further events took place, except the arrival of a couple of fishermen in a small boat, with an enormous salmon, weighing forty lbs., which they offered for sale, stating that they had caught it in their nets in the Fjord. Harry, of course, was greatly excited at the sight, and immediately imagined that when he got to Sandéthal, he should haul such monsters out by the dozen, at the very first offer of Mr. Farlow's flies.

But after the interest aroused by this incident had subsided, a kind of spell seemed to steal over the senses of the passengers. They had recourse to books and newspapers, and tried to read them, but failed in the attempt. They only grew drowsy and dreamy. Even chat died away to nothing, and ceased altogether after a while. People had got past the point when it seemed desirable to be agreeable to one another, and make a pleasant impression. They had pretty well found out by now, who and what their neighbours were, and whether they liked them or didn't. And even if you like a person very, *very* much, it is a difficult thing to go on talking, talking, talking through a whole long day. There comes a time when silence is a luxury, which you can't refrain from indulging in. That time had now been reached by all on board, with the exception of those who worked the boat. The slow, gliding motion past perpetual mountains, and through perpetual waters, produced a kind of torpor of the brain. It refused to think or to exert itself. Like Tennyson's lotus-eater, the marvellous beauty and stillness of the land lulled it to rest. Perhaps, too, everybody was a little tired.

Certainly after her experiences of the previous night, Annie, for one, was heartily rejoiced to think that she had not to spend another night on board. It was an inexpressible relief to escape from a second edition of the ladies' cabin. They were due to arrive at their destination at nine, but it was twelve o'clock before Sandéthal was reached. To get to it, they had left the main Fjord, and steamed up a small subsidiary one. The first glimpse was favourable. The little cluster of houses that compose a Norwegian village was romantically situated at the very head of the Fjord, and surrounded on three sides by an amphitheatre of magnificent mountains, which now stood out in deep, dark, silhouette against the evening sky. There was still sufficient light to enable them to

take in the principal bearings of the place. They could just see that the river, flowing in a widening channel into the Fjord, had in process of time formed a fertile delta of slightly undulating land, which peeped out amidst its rocky surroundings like a green jewel.

Here stood most of the cottages, with their miniature fields of corn and rye growing close at hand. The largest and most important-looking house was red in colour, each timber overlapping, whilst the door, window-sills and corners were picked out with a broad stripe of white, which effectually prevented the whole from appearing heavy. As it was, the warm, rich red harmonized admirably with its background of verdure.

Along the river's bank grew many trees, mostly birch, but interspersed with ash, hazel and elders, which flourished well on the moisture-laden soil. And over the peaceful valley and the doll-like houses, and the great grim mountains steeped in blackness, shone a fair, mild moon, casting silvery gleams upon the hushed and solemn landscape.

As our friends stepped out on to the landing-place, they were met by a tall, fine-looking man, with blue eyes and fair grizzled hair, which he wore long. He greeted them in broken English, and introduced himself as Herr Christian, the proprietor of the red house, and the dwelling where they were to reside.

He assisted them in collecting their luggage, no slight task as their joint effects were positively alarming, and having directed his men to bring it up in the native cart which he had had the foresight to provide for the occasion, led the way along the little white dusty road. It seemed a strange mode of arriving, to be tramping on their own feet, in the small hours of the morning, to a haven of rest which might, or might not, answer their expectations. They missed the convenient four-wheeler, but there was something adventurous and novel about the proceeding which sustained them. Besides, by this time they were really tired, and anxious to get to their beds.

Herr Christian now ascended five rather rickety stone steps. They led up to a kind of porch, round two sides of which ran a rough bench, overshadowed by a pretty, feathery ash. Then, opening the door, he solemnly bade them welcome to Sandéthel, and ushered them into their sitting-room, which was on the ground floor. It was bare, but clean, and had two good windows, which looked out on to the Fjord. A round



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mahogany table stood in the centre of the apartment, which was painted the usual favourite pale grey. There were four horse-hair chairs, and one horse-hair sofa up against the wall, one corner cupboard, one black stove, two bright brass spit-toons, clean white curtains that, to a great extent, shut out the view, and in one window-sill a red geranium, in the other a pot of ivy, which had been so cleverly trained that it formed a complete arch. There was not another thing in the room of any sort, but our compatriots were by this time getting accustomed to Norwegian ideas of furnishing. Off the sitting-room were two tiny little square bedrooms, which Herr Christian assigned to Mr. and Mrs. Thompson, and taking Harry up a steep ladder staircase, he gave him one overhead. Then, having inquired if they wanted anything, he bowed himself out, in order to finish his night's rest.

In spite of straw mattresses, hard pillows, and scanty covering, our friends slept the sleep of the just, only awaking next morning to find the sun streaming in at their blindless windows with dazzling brilliancy, and illumining with shafts of golden light the flower-decked hayfield at the back of the house.

Then, when they looked out, the beauty and freshness of the valley, the greenness of the grass, and of the flowing river, the reflections of the mighty hills swathed in sunshine, with their diadems of snow, and silvery waterfalls leaping downwards in a precipitous line of foam, and the rushing sound of many waters, repaid them for all the fatigues they had undergone.

Now that they had reached their destination, they felt that they would willingly submit to the same experiences, to be rewarded by a like result. The tossing on board *The Colorado*, the native "Dampskib," with its queer smells, and still queerer food, passed from their minds, and they now looked forward with unmitigated pleasure to their stay in the land of the Sagas.

It is wonderful how different a complexion a good night's rest will put upon things. Even Ebenezer condescended to admire the scenery, and to say that he considered it beat Scotland out-and-out, a great concession for him, since, as a rule, he did not approve of anything foreign, except moths, and perhaps, yes, perhaps French chicken and salad. The two latter were amongst the very few articles not to be got so good in England.

He put his little sandy head out of the window, looked around, and exclaimed, in his most patronizing tone :

"Well, upon my word, it ain't half a bad sort of place after all, and if only I can succeed in securing some good specimens, I daresay I shall manage to put up with it for a fortnight."

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## CHAPTER XII.

### HARRY TRIES TO CONVERSE IN PURE NORSK.

HARRY's first experiences of Norwegian home life would have been decidedly amusing, had they not also partaken of a somewhat painful character.

Although getting on for forty years of age, Mr. Thompson still retained one exceedingly childish attribute ; namely, when he got tired, he got cross, and a single night's rest was not sufficient to do away with the ill effects produced by his journey. It was evident when he arose from his couch that, to quote a popular saying, he had got out of bed the wrong way. The black dog was on his back.

Harry arrived at this conclusion in the following manner.

Through the thin wooden walls every sound going on all over the house was distinctly audible. While he was leisurely commencing his toilet, and once more indulging in the luxury of a cold bath, he heard Ebenezer's voice grumble out in its usual querulous tone :

"What a beastly little bedroom this is to be sure. There's hardly room to turn round in it. How are you getting on, Annie?"

"Oh ! all right," came the cheerful reply.

"That's more than I am. I can't find any one of my things. Where the devil have I put my razors to ? I took them out and laid them down somewhere, that I'll take my oath, and yet they seem to have disappeared in the most mysterious manner." And then followed a scuffling sound, as if he were making an energetic but fruitless search after the missing articles.

Presently, in a louder and crosser key, the little man called out :

"I say, Annie, can't you come and help me ? It's all your fault my razors being lost. I wanted to pack them up in my

portmanteau, and you persuaded me against my better judgment to put them into my hand-bag."

"I think I know where to find them," said Annie, and sure enough she did so in a trice. But it was easier to discover the razors than to restore her husband to good humour.

"Catch me leaving England again in a hurry," he growled, not deeming it necessary to thank his wife for her services. "I was a fool ever to put myself in this predicament."

"Come, come, it's not a very serious one," she rejoined cheerily. "We shall soon settle down. Things always seem a little bit strange just at first."

"That's all very well, if I intended to settle down here, but I am by no means so sure that I shall."

"Indeed! Ebenezer," in accents of surprise. "I thought that owing to the glowing accounts of Sandéthal given to you by your friend, Mr. Smith, who was here last year, you had quite made up your mind to stay at least a fortnight. Anyway, such was my impression."

"Then your impression was wrong. Only fools make up their minds beforehand with respect to things they know nothing about," he responded grumpily. "Besides, the fact is there are certain drawbacks to our continued residence here which I never contemplated."

"Drawbacks!" she exclaimed innocently. "What drawbacks?"

"Well, to tell you the truth, Annie, when I settled to come to Norway so early in the season, and to take my annual holiday now instead of later on, as is my custom, I did hope that we should have the place more or less to ourselves."

"The whole country, do you mean, Ebenezer, or only this particular spot?"

"Tut, you understand my meaning quite well. It's no use trying to equivocate."

"Nothing was further from my thoughts," she rejoined, determined to take no notice of his ill-humour. "And as for not being alone, there's nobody here but Mr. Hopson."

"Precisely. That youth is the very person I object to. He has a most irritating effect upon my nervous system."

"Why! he is very harmless and inoffensive, I am sure."

"You are sure, but I am not," he snarled in reply. "I tell you I never bargained for the presence of a third party on my honeymoon."

"We are not so very happy *tête-à-tête* as all that," she interrupted sarcastically.

He ignored the remark, though it annoyed him secretly, and went on:

"This young man, of whom I know absolutely nothing whatever, except that he is extremely forward and officious, has fastened himself upon us in the most extraordinary way."

"I really don't see that, Ebenezer. He has taken the fishing for the season, and naturally stays at the only house where the proprietor is accustomed to receive English people. Besides, he has every bit as good a right to be here as ourselves, if not better."

"Pooh! don't gammon me. Do you suppose that I've got no eyes in my head?"

Mrs. Thompson gave an uneasy laugh, as if she had a presentiment what all this preamble portended.

Meanwhile Harry, who could hear every word quite distinctly, felt his ears begin to tingle. He hated the thought of eavesdropping, yet what was he to do?

"I am sure Mr. Hopperton is a very nice, pleasant young man," resumed Mrs. Thompson after a slight pause.

"Yes," said her better half, grimly. "So you seem to think."

"It was very kind of him, Ebenezer, giving you those beautiful, warm shoes. They have come in most useful."

"Do you suppose, if I had wanted them, that I could not have bought them for myself?" he said surlily.

"I call that very ungrateful. You should always accept a present in the spirit in which it is meant."

"Not always, Annie. Mr. Hopperton's present to me was simply meant, 'I admire your wife most awfully. Shut your eyes, there's a good fellow, and let me carry on as I like. I'm no fool, I tell you.'"

"If you thought that, you had no business to have taken the shoes," she said indignantly.

"I shouldn't if I had known how things were going to turn out; but it never entered my head to imagine that you would encourage him in the indecent manner you are doing."

"Indecent!" she exclaimed in an offended tone. "Oh, Ebenezer, how can you say such a thing? It's too bad."

"Of course, what went on between you when I was ill in my berth and suffering martyrdom, and you were gadding about enjoying yourself on deck," he continued severely,

have no means of knowing, but I am convinced that anyone seeing you on board that cursed native "Dampskib," whose outlandish name I don't even attempt to pronounce, would have thought—and with every reason—that you were Mr. Hopperton's bride rather than mine."

This was too much for Harry. Affairs had reached a climax, and he felt more and more ashamed of overhearing a marital discussion, evidently not meant for his ears. He stamped violently on the floor and coughed several times as loud as he could.

"Hush, hush!" exclaimed Mrs. Thompson, in an agonised voice. "Mr. Hopperton will hear you. He's in the room above. Oh, for goodness sake, be quite!"

"Not I," replied Mr. Thompson irritably. "I don't care if he does hear what I say. It will do him good, and teach him not to make quite so free with other men's wives. Young cub! I should like to kick him out of the house."

Harry could endure the situation no longer. His heart was swelling with indignation against "that jealous brute," as he mentally apostrophised Mr. Thompson, and also with tender pity for his wife. Poor little woman! What a time she had of it! It was all very fine talking about the sacredness of the matrimonial bond, but really there were some men not fit to be married. The daily, hourly torturing of a helpless thing, over whom they had absolute control, might be lawful, but surely not right. He would have given all the world at that moment to have been able to horsewhip Ebenezer within an inch of his life. Bullies were always cowards. He felt certain he could frighten him. But then, what would be the use? It would only be the worse for Annie hereafter, and she—had enough to bear as it was.

So he controlled his anger as best he could and hastily finished dressing. Seeing no signs of breakfast in the sitting-room, and also feeling anxious to escape from the house for a while, he took his hat and went out, thinking to prospect the river. The glorious morning air soon soothed his irritation. Gossamer clouds, as white as the snow itself, and as soft and fleecy as cotton-wool, were hanging on the mountains' sides creeping slowly and imperceptibly upwards and onwards. The sun shone on them and on the naked cliffs beneath. In the valley everything was fresh and sweet, thanks to the heavy dew which had fallen on the previous night. The tall, feathery grasses shot out prismatic flashes of light as they bowed their



nodding heads to the gentle breeze. Quantities of seedy sorrel, the tawny colour of iron rust, grew amongst them, and gave them a rich, warm tone, which assumed a whitish hue whenever a slant of wind bent their pale green stems to earth. Interspersed were clover, harebells, buttercups, ox-eyed daisies, and wild thyme, all growing with luxurious profusion, and reminding one of an oasis in the desert. The birch-tress shook out their pretty light leaves, which glinted brightly in the sunshine. The stems of many were of a deep sienna shade, that showed with picturesque effect against their verdant background. The silvery bark of these had been stripped off to make the first strata of the cottage roofs hard by, which afterwards were completed with earth and stones. These same cottages were wonderfully simple in construction, and resembled nothing so much as big wooden boxes. The ruder ones were raised from the ground by four large stones about a couple of feet high, and possessing a flat surface. On these the planks were laid which formed the floor. Thus they were lifted above the moist, porous soil. Harry was so much interested that his thoughts with regard to Ebenezer soon assumed a less bellicose nature. He determined that for Mrs. Thompson's sake it would be wiser to make no alteration in his conduct towards her husband. He was a cross-grained little beast, but that was not his affair, and henceforth he would be careful to avoid giving him cause for jealousy. The above was a most laudable resolution, of which his conscience very highly approved, and all he had got to do was to stick to it. In his present frame of mind, this seemed easy enough. It was possible that he had been a little—well, just a little—too attentive to Mrs. Thompson. His attentions might readily become less marked without hurting the feelings of either husband or wife. At all events, he was not prepared to occasion a battle royal, the consequences of which might be awkward for all parties. Thus decided Harry in his calmer and more prudent mood. Excellent resolutions are not nearly so difficult to make as to adhere to in time of temptation. This he had soon to discover. Men and women too, would be magnificent creatures if they could but act up to their good intentions, and were not so easily led away by opposing influences.

When Harry returned from his matutinal stroll, he found Mrs. Thompson sitting, darning a pair of her lord and master's stockings, to all appearances, the very personification of a demure, well conducted, and domestic wife. She scarce

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ared to look at him, and withdrew her hand immediately, as  
afraid to touch his for a second longer than was strictly  
ecessary.

The entry of Ebenezer prevented any attempt at con-  
rsation, which was somewhat of a relief, for they felt  
utally embarrassed, knowing without speech that each was  
are of what had taken place.

Before long, breakfast was served by a rough-haired, flat-  
isted "pige" (girl), wearing a clean cotton handkerchief  
er her head, the corners of which were fastened under her  
in. The boots of this damsels dwarfed every other sound,  
their owner, with a truly leviathan tread, stumped over the  
petless boards. When the table was loaded, she muttered  
e accustomed "vaer saa godt," equivalent to the English  
ou are served," and retired, when it was once more possible  
make one's voice heard.

A dish of small sea-fish, and another containing fried eggs,  
ked promising. Even Mr. Thompson's dissatisfied coun-  
ance broke up into smiles, and displayed a few gleams of  
erfulness at the sight. An appetizing odour arose from the  
nds, which, blending with the fragrant aroma of hot coffee,  
grateful in the extreme.

All were eager to attack the dishes, when, to the general  
may, it was discovered that Margrete had forgotten the  
ks. This omission was vexatious, since it occasioned a  
day, and they were excessively hungry.

Now, ever since Harry had first conceived the idea of  
ending his summer in Norway, he had been studying  
Bennett's phrase-book with the greatest diligence and per-  
erance, and it was with keen delight, that finding Margrete  
ould not speak a word of English, he saw himself in a  
tion to let off a few of his carefully digested sentences.  
had tried them on board the "Dampskib," but somehow  
ther they had not been very successful, chiefly, he was  
uaded, because the steward would insist on addressing  
in his—Harry's—native tongue, and did not deign to  
n when he endeavoured to return the compliment in  
st Norsk.

But Margrete was a splendid subject on whom to practise  
the Norwegian language.

Well there was none in the sitting-room; however "necessity  
is the mother of invention," and Ebenezer, mindful that the  
contents of the dishes were rapidly cooling, had a happy

inspiration, and struck the edge of his knife so sharply, and with such excellent effect, against the copper coffee-pot, that Margrete soon appeared in hot haste.

Now was Harry's opportunity. He knew what forks were. He had learnt it only the previous day, and he smiled at himself at the thought of how he should impress Mr. and Mrs. Thompson.

"Vi-önsker-gaffel," he enunciated very slowly and distinctly and in his choicest Anglican accent.

Margrete looked at him with dull uncomprehending countenance. She was a capital girl in her way, but not quick intelligence. Harry repeated the sentence still more emphatically, but with a like result. His surprise was only equalled by his mortification. Evidently the Norwegian of Mr. Bennett, and the Norwegian spoken in the country, were two entirely different things.

"It's very odd," he said in a blank tone. "I'm afraid she is a stupid sort of woman, if not a complete idiot."

Ebenezer here intervened, and commenced a series of pantomimic gestures, which certainly proved more efficacious than Harry's Norsk. At all events he succeeded in making Margrete understand what was wanted.

A smile of amusement stole over her face. She nodded her head vivaciously, and said "Ja, ja, jei forstaar," and immediately vanished into the kitchen, which was close by the ground floor.

"It is extraordinary how unintelligent these people are," said Harry with a decided feeling of soreness at his failure to make himself comprehended. "Even when you speak to them in their own language, they don't seem a bit quick and sharp, or as if they took in your meaning."

"I expect the accent has a good deal to do with it," said Mr. Thompson maliciously.

"Perhaps so. It may, and now you speak of it, I am reminded that Bennett expressly says in his book, that the common people up country talk a dialect which differs widely from the pure Norwegian, and varies in different Fjords to such an extent, that the natives themselves cannot understand each other."

"Well! anyhow," responded Ebenezer with a sarcastic chuckle, "your pure Norwegian don't go down, and ain't of much use, though no doubt it's the fault of the people, not yours."

Harry bit his lip, but refrained from making any reply. Only he felt the inclination to punch Ebenezer's head in return. He was so like a little mocking, chattering ape, who said things on purpose to annoy you.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### NOT MUCH OF A HONEYMOON.

For the whole, breakfast did not pass off very cheerily. Mrs. Thompson, who up till this morning had been full of life and spirits, commenting brightly and often wittily on everything that she saw, now sat in almost total silence at the end of the table. She only spoke when obliged, and did not address Harry, except once, when she asked him if he would take another cup of coffee. The contrast was so marked between the present and her previous conduct, that even had he not had the clue to it, it could not have escaped his observation. There was a tell-tale red rim too round her eyes, which looked decidedly suspicious. Neither was Harry himself in a conversational mood, though he tried to talk away as if nothing had happened, but the attempt was not very successful, and was gently forced. As soon as the meal came to an end he rose, saying that he must go and unpack his fishing things. When husband and wife were once more alone, Mrs. Thompson showed signs of returning animation. She lifted her head, and looking at him coldly, said in her most frigid tone:

"I trust, Ebenezer, that my conduct this morning has been to your liking."

"It is neither to my liking nor my disliking," he replied calmly. "I should have thought your own sense would have told you that it is not a very becoming thing for a married woman to fling herself at the head of every young man who comes across, and who may happen to pay her a compliment or two."

A hot flush rose to her face, and lost itself only amongst the roots of her nut-brown hair. She was not yet used to the many paths of matrimony, and had not learnt to conceal what she felt, as every wise woman so often must do. If she

would keep the peace. Annie was sensitive, and if she was pricked, she showed it.

And Mr. Thompson having already become aware of the fact, delighted in inflicting a sly stab whenever the opportunity arose. It just made her remember that he was master.

"How dare you talk to me in such a way," she exclaimed passionately. "I have done nothing to deserve it."

"So *you* say," he sneered. "I think differently. I am of opinion that your conduct has not only been unseemly but also most blameable and foolish, and in so saying, believe me, I don't exaggerate one jot."

"You shall not make such charges without substantiating them. I won't sit here and hear my fair name taken away from my own husband. Prove to me, once for all, how I am so much to blame." And she glared at him with flashing eyes expressive of unutterable scorn and hatred.

He was a little taken aback by her vehemence, but nevertheless enjoyed the storm he had provoked. At any rate he did not attempt to allay it, as he so easily might have done had he chosen.

"The way you have flirted with Mr. Hopperton, ever since you met him on board *The Colorado* has been somewhat quite outrageous. Deny it if you can."

"I do deny it; positively and emphatically," she said slowly though the colour, that had scarcely died away, once more came to her cheek as she spoke. "And as a proof of my sincerity, Ebenezer, if this sort of thing is to go on between you and I beg of you to let us leave Sandéthal at once. We can go to some other valley where moths and grubs abound."

"There you go, always sneering and turning up your nose at my poor moths, just because you know I am fond of them and that nothing else interests me half so much. But it's no wonder I might expect. You are beginning to show yourself in your true colours at last, and as for going away from here I shall do so when I choose, neither sooner nor later."

"So I suppose," she answered bitterly, stung to the heart by a sense of her own helplessness. "Nevertheless, if you believe for one moment what you say, you have no right to stay another hour. It's dishonourable."

"Hoity toity! Right, indeed! Right is a remarkably sounding word, Mrs. Thompson, and as you have displayed very little discretion, you must allow me in future to be



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o add to my collection, I shall stop on, always taking precious  
ood care to keep that fellow Hopperton in his place; if not,  
nd it suits my convenience to go, I shall pack up and be off  
o-morrow. Anyway, please remember I'll not stand being  
dictated to."

His little, miserable person, combined with his domineering  
peech, filled her with unutterable loathing. Never had he  
emed in her eyes so mean and so petty, or so utterly  
stitute of every manly attribute, as at this moment, when he  
as endeavouring to force upon her consciousness the fact  
at he was the stronger of the two. Yet he was not so in  
ality. The law, it is true, made him her master, she his  
ave; but although she was very far from perfect, her nature  
as superior to his, and made of finer texture. No doubt she  
ught not to have been aware of this, yet, how could she help  
cognizing the real state of the case, without being hopelessly  
nd totally blind? It was a great misfortune; just about the  
orst thing that could happen to a woman, to find that the  
an with whom she had linked her life filled her with no  
ntiments of respect or esteem. Such a condition of affairs  
ought out all her bad qualities, and all his. The newly  
arried couple acted and reacted upon each other with fatal  
fect. Annie Thompson was clear-sighted enough to know  
is.

"You forget," she said in measured accents, which sought  
conceal her wrath, "that it may not suit my convenience to  
ay here and be insulted, especially in the very presence of  
e man with whose name you have had the audacity to as-  
ciate mine."

"Pooh! Your convenience is my convenience. When a  
oman marries it's always the case."

"Alas! If the unfortunates only knew what they were  
ing, and had a larger experience of men, how few of them  
ould ever take the fatal step," sighed Mrs. Thompson under  
r breath.

Luckily Ebenezer did not overhear the remark. He was  
ngratulating himself on having brought her to her bearings,  
d thought that perhaps enough had been said for the  
esent.

"Now look here, Annie," he resumed, after a somewhat pro-  
ged pause, and speaking in a more amiable tone than he

had hitherto adopted, "I don't want to quarrel, particularly about a young jackanapes who is not worthy to make mischief between husband and wife——"

"You have made the mischief, not Mr. Hopperton," she interposed, more warmly than wisely.

"I'm just going out for half an hour or so, to take a look round the bushes," he continued, ignoring the interruption. "By-the-bye, have you mended those stockings I gave you?"

"Yes," she said sullenly, resenting a graciousness which made it appear that she was the sole offender, not he. "The are quite ready. You, my master, *ordered* me to darn them so they are darned. What need to ask?"

"That's a good girl. I thought I had better give them to you to do, before the holes got larger. And now I'll be off, making a move towards the door.

She detested him; but she was his wife, and she sincerely desired to subdue her own instincts, and if she could not love him, at least to do her duty. That was the one principle she had striven to adhere to since her marriage. It required heroic effort now, nevertheless she inquired, quite meekly and submissively, to outward appearances, if he wished her to accompany him and carry his paraphernalia.

He was pleased by the offer, and it seemed suddenly to occur to him that perhaps, after all, he might have been a little hard upon her. Anyhow, he bent his sickly yellow face down to her fresh, rosy one and gave her a kiss. She recoiled involuntarily, as at the touch of a serpent. A shiver went through her frame.

"There, old lady!" he exclaimed patronizingly. "It's all right. I'm not angry with you any more directly you are a good girl. Come, let's be friends again."

"We are more than friends," she answered, with a curious inflection of the voice. "We have the happiness and privilege to be husband and wife. When two people are bound together as you and I are, it's bad policy to quarrel about trifles. The own self-interest ought to tell them that."

"Ha, ha! Just so—just so!" he assented, approving of the argument he did not wholly understand. "And, of course, I weren't so awfully fond of you, Annie, I should not cut you rough at the sight of some other fellow wanting to spoon you and to make you fonder of him than you are of me."

"Am I to put all you have said to me down to the score of affection, Ebenezer? If so, I ought to feel extremely flattered."

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"Yes, most certainly. If I didn't care for you, you might  
ry on as you chose. It's nothing but love on my part."

"A queer sort of love," she murmured under her breath.  
en aloud: "I don't want to 'carry on.' I only want to talk  
people I like, in my natural manner."

"Ah, you puss! Perhaps it ain't altogether your fault that  
u're such an awfully fetching little woman."

Whereupon Ebenezer, considering he had made ample  
ends for any possible severity on his part, chucked her under  
chin, put on his blue spectacles, stuffed half-a dozen glass  
ttles into his pocket, and departed in search of suitable  
shes to smear for the evening's campaign.

But she, when he was gone, rose hurriedly to her feet, and  
ing out her pocket-handkerchief passed it viciously over  
spot where Ebenezer's clumsy lips had been applied.  
ection, indeed! If this was the form his affection took, she  
uld rather inspire a merciless blood-feud. Every nerve  
hin her body was tingling with indignation and disgust.  
de and delicacy had been alike cruelly outraged, and in a  
nner which the coarser mind of man could not even realize.  
he had been insulted by her own husband without any just  
se. Nothing in this world makes a woman feel more bitter,  
raises such a tumult of emotion within her bosom.

A gentleman would never have done such a thing.

Ebenezer was a cad—a mean, low, suspicious cad! So she  
herself in the first vehemence of her anger and disdain.  
for all that she was in his power. There was no getting  
y from him. Oh! how heavily the yoke sat. How bitterly  
repented her marriage—that fatal marriage!

scalding tears sprang to her eyes and trickled unheeded  
n either cheek. Life seemed so blank and cheerless, such  
eep, dark, empty void. It was as if she were hemmed in  
rison walls, through which no ray of light could penetrate.  
ceforth, it was possible she might find temporary amuse-  
t and forgetfulness, but nothing could avail her really.  
re she was, bound to him for forty, fifty, perhaps sixty  
s, and each year would make the chain more intolerable,  
e galling; her misery the keener and fiercer. What a  
spect of connubial bliss!

She had never attempted to disguise from herself the fact  
she did not love Ebenezer, but she would have put up  
him, and tolerated him to the best of her ability, if he  
had the good sense and kindness to help her a little. So

much lay in his power if only he chose to exert it beneficently. Instead of which, what had he done?

He had accused her to her face of unseemly behaviour, and rendered her so miserable, constrained, and ill at ease, that she almost felt afraid to open her mouth in Mr. Hopperton's presence. Thoughts that had never entered her head were now put there by him and his vile suspicions. Husband or no husband, she hated him. It was his doing, not hers. He had brought it upon himself.

As she stood there, she could not help thinking how different her fate might have been had she not been bound for the rest of her days to a petty, selfish individual, with whom she had no sympathy whatever. To do her justice, she had not expected much from her marriage.

It had been an act of pure sacrifice and urgency on her part. Circumstances had driven her into it, but she had hoped better things than this—hoped for peace and quiet, if not happiness.

It was very soon for a loving couple to come to a rupture: only four weeks and a few days after standing before God's altar, and swearing to love and honour each other until death.

True, Ebenezer might never find out how matters stood. Both for his sake and hers, she hoped his eyes might not be opened, nevertheless, as far as she was concerned, it was a final rupture of every feeling of regard and friendliness. Henceforth, she looked upon him as her natural foe, against whom she must guard with the utmost vigilance, and ever be on the defensive.

Presently she heard Harry's voice speaking to Herr Christian on the porch outside. His soft, gentlemanly tones contrasted curiously with the rough ones that still rang in her ears, and they altered her train of thought. All at once she wiped her eyes and gave a little hard laugh.

Since Ebenezer believed so badly of her without any legitimate cause, he might just as well have some reasons for his suspicions.

She liked Mr. Hopperton and he liked her. It had even shot through her mind that if they had met sooner, life would have worn a very different and more cheerful aspect.

Up till to-day she had never consciously flirted with him, but now she suddenly resolved to change her tactics.

Ebenezer should see that she would not stand being abused for nothing, and that by ordering her to avoid Mr. Hopperton he had only made matters a thousand times worse.

In dealing with an unreasonable man, it was a fatal thing to let him think you were afraid of him. The only plan was to carry the war into the enemy's camp and give back as good as you got.

Thus reasoned Annie, though against all her better nature; but every finer feeling had been so mercilessly wounded by her husband's words, that for the time being they sank into revolt, and the lower and baser part of her gained the upper-hand. Good and evil take most of us for their battle-field, to the intense discomfiture of the poor mortal spirit which they rack, and Evil wins the victory quite as often as Good.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

"NAUGHTY, NAUGHTY; BUT OH! SO NICE!"

It is no good thing for a woman when a spirit of defiance enters into her. Throughout life her lot is one of endurance. When she tries to break through the ranks of her regiment in even the slightest degree, and rebels against the seemingly cruel, unjust, but inexorable decree of Nature, she is bound sooner or later to get the worst of it. And the higher her spirit, the greater the disaster. A mild, unsensitive, or stupid woman takes things easily. Harsh words do not penetrate to the very depths of her being, and lie there quivering like an arrow sent well home to the target. Mean actions do not rouse her wrath until every drop of blood in her body boils with contempt and indignation. She is not fine-fibred, and accepts her fate, whether it be good or bad, placidly and indifferently. Such women are not capable either of a great love or a great hate. They are sluggish and lymphatic by temperament, and enjoy a big dinner and plenty of wine almost as much as their lords. They grow stout, red-faced, and double-chinned; for they possess no distracting passions to torment the body, and so it thrives, whilst the soul and the intellect lie dormant. These are the women calculated to make contented and obedient wives, and to produce healthy progeny. They are neither nervous, excitable, nor hysterical. Nothing upsets them, because nothing affects them, and they prove much more comfortable creatures for a man to live with than a



woman of character, who analyzes and questions their relative positions, and who sees little to envy in hers and much in his.

But to learn this lesson by heart, and to find out that in spite of her spirit she *must* submit to her husband, however inferior he may be, is a very difficult thing; but more especially is it difficult to a young and pretty woman, conscious of her own good looks, and the power they confer, and who rejoices in all the physical vivacity bestowed by a sound constitution, and certain gifts of attraction, which she cannot help exercising, however innocently, over the sterner sex. It is but Nature again, only a nature that the husband does not approve of and makes no allowances for.

The little, unconscious coquetties that Annie had hitherto practised upon Harry Hopperton were quite harmless in their way, being but the results of youth and high spirits. If this was to be considered flirting, then she had flirted with almost every man she had ever seen. An instinctive desire to please ruled strong within her breast, but she liked to make herself agreeable to women just as much as to men, and therefore had always been popular with both parties.

After all, was it not quite natural that when Ebenezer was groaning and grumbling in his berth she should find it pleasant, talking to Harry, and exchanging ideas in a cheerful, sociable fashion. Besides, she was certainly not the very least bit in love with him. She had never been in love in her life. She thought him extremely nice, and decidedly good-looking, but that was all, and one may think a good many men nice in this world, without wanting to go raving mad about them, and worshipping them on a pedestal like demi-gods. Between liking and loving there lies a tremendous gulf.

Annie was a sensible enough little person in her way, and moreover had had the advantage of being brought up on soundly moral principles by an excellent mother whom she adored. If Ebenezer had left her alone, and, to use a vulgar saying, had not "set her back up," his honour would have been quite safe in his wife's hands. Her own good sense would always have prevented her from carrying any flirtation too far. She wanted just a little bit of rope, that was all, so that she might gambol innocently about on the plain of life, without being perpetually brought up by a sharp tug and reminded she was in leading-strings. She would not have abused her liberty. But Ebenezer was not large-minded enough to understand this, and mistook for vice what was only play.

Therefore he strained the matrimonial halter so tight'y that it threatened to snap altogether. Already some of its more delicate fibres had given way, thanks to the rude handling received.

At any rate, he had succeeded in placing Annie on her mettle, and rousing a spirit of defiance within her bosom. When she heard Harry's voice, she wiped away her tears, and putting her head out of the window, said :

"Is that you, Mr. Hopperton? What are you doing?"

He knew perfectly well that Mr. Thompson had gone out, having seen him start some ten minutes ago, and he had been inwardly debating whether it would be kinder on his part to leave the little woman alone until she recovered her usual equanimity, or to endeavour to console her by his society and conversation. He was vain enough to think that they might prove efficacious, and his inclinations were entirely in favour of pursuing the latter, rather than the former course. Therefore, when he heard Annie's inquiry, inclination quickly triumphed over conscience, and coming at once to the window, which was raised only about four feet from the ground, he leant his arms on the sill and looked in.

This was an extremely favourable position, for being taller than Annie by a head, and she having sat down, it just brought his eyes on a level with hers. Though Annie's were a little dimmed by weeping, they had a soft, lustrous look about them which set his blood aflame. She had never looked at him like this before. His man's temperament realized the difference in the twinkling of an eye. It sent all his good resolutions flying to the wind.

"I was unpacking some of my odds and ends," he replied in answer to her question. Then he insinuated his fair head a little farther into the room and consequently nearer to hers, and said abruptly :

"What is the matter with you this morning? You are not yourself."

"No—nothing is the matter," she answered, though the expression of her countenance belied the denial.

"Yes there is, I know better."

"In that case it's no use my contradicting you, Mr. Hopperton."

"Not a bit. And what's more, you know that I know what has upset you."

A vivid blush, painful in its intensity, dyed her cheeks crimson.

"If you do, for goodness sake don't say anything," she said imploringly.

"I won't, if you don't like the subject mentioned."

"How could I like it? The whole thing is so disgraceful that it ought to be consigned to oblivion as speedily as possible."

"I agree with you there. I can't tell you how grieved I am on your account."

"Thank you. You are very kind; nevertheless, I hope to be able to fight my own battles. Your intervention in my behalf would only make matters worse."

"I'm afraid so; but, Mrs. Thompson—Annie," speaking in low, earnest tones, "I must just say one thing, and then we need never allude to this unpleasant business again."

"What is it, Mr. Hopperton?"

"You—you needn't mind me," he blurted out, turning very red.

"I know I needn't," she said in a subdued voice, averting her head. She understood what he meant, and though the sentiment might not be couched in elegant language, its spirit was delicate and manly.

Her hand was resting on the window-sill. A sudden impulse seized Harry. He took it, and raised it to his lips. She trembled all over from head to foot; yet what possessed her she did not know. For quite ten seconds she made no attempt to draw it away, and he, not receiving any rebuke, repeated the offence with a warmth which caused some mysterious feeling, hitherto unknown, to creep into her heart, and make it palpitate violently. That feeling, so new, and, at the same time, so delicious, kept her spell-bound, even at the loss of her own self-respect.

"See here, Annie," he said, again calling her by her Christian name, and managing to infuse an immense amount of tenderness into his naturally soft and pleasant voice. "You and I are not ceremonious people and need not beat about the bush. After what happened this morning, it is better for us to have an explanation, and then we need never recur to the subject."

"Oh, Mr. Hopperton, must we talk of it?" Already her conduct was bearing its fruits, and she winced at being told she was not a ceremonious person.

"Yes; I think so. What I want you to understand is this, and when the matter is put plainly before you, then you can

decide as you think best. Of course I should be awfully sorry to go away from here and see nothing more of you. You know that, don't you?" looking fondly into her eyes.

His ardent gaze confused her to such a degree that she made no reply; only her conscience told her that she was taking a very complete and not altogether warrantable revenge on Ebenezer. But although it was horribly naughty standing there with Harry Hopperton squeezing her hand, it was nice, and she stifled all qualms of conscience for the present, resolutely refusing to listen to them.

"If my being here is likely to give rise to any more disagreeable scenes between you and your husband," he resumed, "I will clear out of this to-morrow, and not come back till you have left. Eh? would that please you and settle the difficulty?"

Oddly enough, it did not appear to her at that moment as if would.

The subject under discussion was an awkward one, and she sought safety in silence. He waited for a second, then finding she made no reply, said:

"Annie, answer me this question truly. Would my departure render things any easier for you to bear?"

The tears started to her eyes. What a good fellow he was! Much too good to get entangled with a married woman, whose love could not advantage him in any way, but the reverse.

She shook her head mournfully. Her heart was beginning to feel too big for her body, a sensation which quite precludes women from acting with wisdom and prudence.

"It would not help much, really; besides," and she blushed as red as a rose, "why should you go away on our account? Such an act of tyranny on our part would be shameful, especially when there is no real reason for it."

He brightened up at this speech, and gave her hand another and still closer pressure.

With a sentiment of self-shame at having allowed him to detain it so long, she withdrew it, though not without resistance on his part, so soon does a man become emboldened by any little false move made by the woman, and helps her eagerly down from one tiny step to a far steeper descent.

"No," he repeated energetically. "There is no real reason, of course."

"And then, you know, Mr. Hopperton," she went on,

trampling ruthlessly on that still small voice with'n her, whose counsels, though excellent, did not chime in with her mood, "the fishing is a great consideration. No doubt you are paying a high rent, and have come all the way from England on purpose to fish. After making all your arrangements it would never do to lose a whole fortnight's sport simply because Ebenezer has taken some ridiculous idea into his head."

"Well, it does seem a pity, certainly," said Harry, to whom this side of the question had already occurred. "But I would not mind that if it would benefit you."

"I don't see how it could—at least, not permanently."

"I should hate myself if I got you into any more rows, and—and"—blushing up to the roots of his hair—"for the life of me, Annie, I can't help liking and admiring you. Now, have I made you very angry?" and he looked at her in a hesitating, penitent sort of way.

But what woman ever is incensed by such a confession? She may pretend to be so, just for the sake of appearances, yet more often she greets the offender with a kind smile of forgiveness.

"Foolish boy!" she exclaimed in accents of mock reproof, giving him a playful tap on the shoulder. "You are far too fond of talking nonsense. It's a bad habit which seems to grow upon you."

"A pleasant one, nevertheless," he responded. "So pleasant that it would be a pity to check its growth."

"You are becoming a perfect adept at pretty speeches, Mr. Hopperton, but I must stand here no longer listening to them."

"Why not? Are you particularly busy?"

"No; but I am keeping you from your occupation, and as it probably was far more profitable than your present one, that would be a sin."

"Never mind. I would stop here for ever if I might."

"What! and get covered with caterpillars from the ash overhead. See, there is one crawling up your shoulder already, and no doubt there are dozens of others ready to follow their comrade's example."

He brushed it off with a shudder. Having lived in London all his life, he was not much used to creeping things, and had an intense aversion for them. She laughed at his evident disgust.

"There! Are you cured of your folly? If so the caterpillar has had a very beneficial effect."



"How horribly prosaic you are," he said. "You don't seem to have a scrap of sentiment in you."

She gave a little sigh, which he did not hear.

"All the better for me. And now, Mr. Hopperton, be off. What were you engaged upon when I called out?"

"I was attempting to unpack the stores, but got into a most hopeless muddle."

"Ah! I suppose you're not used to being your own servant, and so feel a little bewildered when you have got to wait upon that exacting creature, Number One. Shall I come and help you?"

"Thanks; you are awfully kind. What between bottles of this, and bottles of that, tins by the dozen, and pots of jam innumerable, my wits have got fairly addled."

"Ah!" said Annie, jestingly. "What a thing it is to have such a large, original stock. And now, may I venture on a hint inspired by that word—jam?"

"Most certainly. I shall be only too grateful for any suggestions."

"It's not a suggestion; it's a begging demand."

"Oh!" exclaimed Harry, in the same light tone. "That alters the case altogether. I'm pretty well besieged by them, it is. However, you have roused my curiosity. Pray what your request?"

"If you would put Ebenezer in a good humour, bring forth a pot of marmalade at supper. He dotes upon sweet things, though he has been specially told by the doctor to avoid them."

"And you, the wife of his bosom, put temptation in his way! He! for shame. However, if we can only arrive at the result named, Mr. Thompson shall have every pot of jam I possess." Whereupon, the two young people, whose intimacy had certainly made great strides in the last half-hour, set to work and tore the straw away in handfuls, from the six huge cases of stores which Harry had sent out from England. The consciousness of being together made it pleasant work, and they laboured diligently. They took out all the contents, placed the drier articles, such as hams and bacon, in a cellar under the ground, and brought those required for immediate consumption to the sitting-room, where Mrs. Thompson ranged the numerous pots and tins in a corner cupboard, Harry standing over and handing them to her one by one.

This operation lasted so long, being often delayed by conversation, that it was nearly dinner-time when they had finished,

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They had agreed to dine at two, Mr. Thompson having arranged to take his wife for a long walk in the afternoon, and Harry being eager to try his luck with the salmon.

The gillie told off to attend him, was the same accustomed to accompanying Mr. Smutch. He spoke a little broken English, and appeared to thoroughly understand his business. He nourished a strong affection for the "Elv" (river), and having been born and bred at Sandéthal, knew every stone in it by heart, and the pools which the fish were wont to frequent.

Jens, (pronounced Yens), was a splendid specimen of the mountaineer, standing quite six feet two in height, and possessing a tall, spare, muscular figure, a stolid, but good-humoured face, and a peculiarly long, swinging stride, which recalled the story of the giant with the seven-leagued boots.

He had already reported to the "Engelskmand," that the season was an exceptionally late one, and that very few fish were up the river as yet, but there might be a chance of picking up one or two sea-trout in the lower pools at high-tide somewhere between four and five o'clock.

This was rather a staggerer to Harry, and by no means in accordance with Mr. Smutch's glowing representations of the numerous salmon he might, could, and would catch, as soon as he had learnt how to throw a fly. But Jens reassured him by telling him that the warm weather they were now having, succeeded by heavy rain, would be almost certain to bring great many fish up from the sea. He declared that they had been seen in the Fjord, waiting for the first "spate," to enable them to make their way inland. This intelligence took the sharp edge off Harry's disappointment.

"I wish to goodness you could come out fishing with me," he said to Annie Thompson as he handed her a tin of ox-tail soup. "How awfully jolly it would be!"

"I wish I could," she responded, "but there's not much chance of it after this morning."

"No, I suppose not; but couldn't you manage to come round by the river on your way home?"

"Perhaps. I'll try. I haven't an idea where Ebeneser intends going, but as he possesses a mania for climbing, I expect he will want to drag me up to the top of these enormous heights," looking up at the blue mountains soaring high overhead.

"Humph! You'll be pretty well tired out if you get to the top of *them*," said Harry.

"Luckily I am a capital walker. It is the one qualification I possess."

"How modest you are! Your admirers would say that you possessed a great number."

"It is to be hoped that my admirers, if I have any, would not be so foolish as to make the remark. Really Mr. Hopperton, your conversation is becoming more and more frivolous."

"I wish you would not call me Mr. Hopperton. It sounds so formal."

"What am I to call you, then?"

"Harry. I call you Annie."

"So I remarked; but I did not give you leave to take that liberty."

He laughed lightly. There was a look in her eyes which contradicted the severity of her speech.

"No, I took it. Is not that always the best plan?"

"Not always. But may I ask one question. Do you wish me to follow your extremely bad example when we are alone, or when Mr. Thompson is present?"

Harry reddened. She was not one of those stately, dignified women who freeze a man up directly he uses a wrong word for a right one; but he felt for all that, that she had administered a just reproof, and had reminded him of the fact that he was going ahead a little too fast.

"You must do as you think best, Mrs. Thompson," he said, returning to the more formal appellation.

She looked out of the window, before replying, and saw Ebenezer's little, shrunken form wending its way home along the narrow road. The white puggery round his hat—by-the-bye, why do lepidopterists always wear puggeries?—and his huge gauze net fluttered gaily in the breeze. He was a ridiculous object thus equipped, and so she seemed to think. Anyhow, the effect produced upon her by the sight of him, was such that she turned quickly away and smiled up at Harry, as if he were a far pleasanter person on whom to rest her eyes. Her conduct was not to be defended. Women of her warm, impulsive temperament, prone to resent injury, and to smart under a sense of insult, frequently do things on the spur of the moment, that seem to them right and natural at the time, but which they bitterly regret afterwards, when their pride flows in a legitimate, instead of in a false direction.

"Well, then—*Harry*"—she said, with a charming little pout and inconsequential gesture, "I shall certainly *not* call you

Harry when we are alone. You ought to be ashamed of yourself for making so very improper a suggestion."

But he did not look so in the least. On the contrary his whole countenance beamed with delight. He realized that she had made another step downwards, and although he did not willingly or consciously wish her to degrade her womanhood for his benefit, he could not help feeling pleased by any and every concession. It was incense to his vanity, and vanity is at the bottom of almost every flirtation between man and woman. They were playing with sharp-edged tools, and might easily receive a cut, without being able to avoid it. He approached quite close to his companion, so close, that fortunately for her she retreated a few inches, but what reply he was going to make to Annie's speech, or whether it was about to take the form of words or of action, must for ever remain unknown, since at that precise moment Mr. Thompson arrived, laden with the spoils of the morning—one tiny brown butterfly.

On seeing his wife and Harry together, he scowled, and then began mopping up his perspiring countenance with a hideous red and yellow handkerchief.

Mrs. Thompson attacked him in a tone of exaggerated cheerfulness.

"Oh! Ebenezer," she exclaimed. "What do you think we have been doing?"

"How the dickens can I tell!" he responded.

"We have been unpacking Mr. Hopperton's stores. Such a lot of them as he has too! Jams, tongues, brawns, marmalade and no end of good things which he insists upon our sharing with him. You will no longer have any cause to complain of the food, for we shall live like fighting cocks."

The little man had had a long walk and was hungry. The intelligence was therefore peculiarly gratifying. His countenance relaxed, and assumed a more amiable and less belligerent expression.

"H'm! very kind of Mr. Hopperton—very kind of him indeed!" he said, smacking his lips in anticipation of all the delicacies that were to come.

"Oh! pray don't mention it," said Harry. "There the things are; and I'm only too glad you should use them."

And so, over the marmalade and the sardines, a temporary peace was established, whilst Annie stood by and listened, and thought to herself:

"Oh! what a mean, pitiable creature Ebenezer is to be sure! If I had abused a man like a pickpocket, as he abused Mr. Hopperton this morning, I could no more accept favours from him, and gobble up his jams and his provisions, than I could fly. Shabbiness isn't the word for it."

But although she found fault with her husband, she was by no means satisfied with herself when she came to reconsider her conduct. She had allowed anger and revenge to obtain the mastery over her, and had lost caste in her own estimation, and doubtless in Harry Hopperton's also.

And that was by no means a pleasant conviction. It would have been disagreeable enough at any time, but it was simply insufferable now, when she was beginning to be really fond of him, and to care so much for his good opinion.

No matter what provocation she had received from Ebenezer, she ought never to have let her temper get the better of her sense of right. Her conduct had been foolish, nay more than foolish—wrong. She had wilfully turned her back on the narrow path and entered the broad. There were no excuses to be made for her. She could advance none in her own self-defence.

Why, oh! why had she not pulled Mr. Hopperton up short when he called her Annie the first time, and whatever had possessed her to look up into his face and smile, and call him Harry back in return? She must have been bewitched.

Yes, bewitched by that fatal passion, which, when once it seizes upon a woman, silences every other voice within her, and reduces into insignificance reason, duty, policy and self-interest.

She loved! What need to say more? A few short minutes had revolutionized her nature.

Those who have experienced the sensation will comprehend how, without having one really guilty particle in her composition, Annie Thompson was reduced to a state in which she was barely responsible for her actions. Others who have never suffered from Cupid's torturing dart, will feel no sympathy with her, shake their heads, and call her "a bad lot."

Well, perhaps she was "a bad lot" in the sense that she possessed warm human passions not always under her control, but for all that, her nature was one which contained a great many elements of good. A husband whom she could have loved and looked up to, would have cultivated them and developed them. As it was, the unfolding of her somewhat complex character was left entirely in her own hands, and to



the force of circumstances. A girl of twenty, thus situated, is to be pitied rather than blamed.

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## CHAPTER XV.

### THE FIRST FISH.

AT half-past three o'clock Harry started for the river with Jens. He was full of hope and anticipation, although, at the same time, he could not help feeling a little anxious as to how he should acquit himself on this, his first venture in the piscatorial line.

When he attempted to put on his casting line, he quickly discovered how great was his ignorance. After fumbling away at the knot for quite five minutes, and tying it every way but the right way, he was, in the end, forced to apply to Jens, who, meanwhile, stood by watching his proceedings with a smile of indulgent amusement, not wholly free from contempt, lighting up his good-humoured, but ordinarily somewhat impassive face. Hitherto, all the Englishmen he had known had inspired him with admiration, both on account of their dexterity, and their superior knowledge in matters of sport, but this one was clearly no better than a child, and quite incapable of teaching him—Jens—anything that he did not know already. Harry's countenance, however, wore an expression of confusion and appeal which made an impression on the mountaineer's kind heart. Besides, he was too courteous by nature to allow his mirth to become apparent. With all due gravity he tendered his assistance, which, as may be imagined, was gladly accepted.

Harry had one great point in his favour. He possessed no false shame about confessing his inexperience, and moreover, was most anxious to learn everything that he could. He now made Jens shew him how to tie and untie the knot in question, at least a dozen times over, until at last it was so impressed upon his memory, that he felt as if he never should forget it. He then essayed to put on a tag, but not having damped it previously, was astonished to find gut that had cost close upon sixty shillings the hank snap like sealing-wax. If Mr. Farlow charged the top price for such miserable stuff, he deserved to be publicly branded as a thief.

"Hulloa!" he exclaimed, holding up the two ends for Jens to inspect them. "This won't do at all."

Jens took the discarded pieces in his great clumsy fingers, examined them carefully and then tested them, putting a good, strong strain upon each.

"Dis good gut—very good," he said gravely. "No fault gut it break. See—you do so; make it all right." And selecting a fresh tag, he placed the silvery strand in the water, where it quickly became soft and pliable, and no longer cracked when tied in a loop. The next step was to choose out a fly from Harry's brand new stock of Butchers, Pophams, Jock Scotts, etc., and as most fishermen are aware, this is notoriously a protracted and tedious affair, seeing that there is nearly always something to be said either for or against every fly that comes under consideration. Harry and Jens pored over the book with intense interest and exceeding deliberation, now turning over a page, then going back to have another look at it, again passing on to the next. At last Jens selected two or three specimens from amongst the goodly number presented for his choice, and carefully weighed their respective qualifications. Finally, believing rather in the chance of a sea-trout than a salmon, especially as the sun was very bright and warm, he picked out a silver-bodied fly, with an attractive scarlet tag, a mixed wing and jungle-cock cheeks.

This, he opined, ought to coax them, if anything would, though he did not conceal his opinion that the day was a highly unfavourable one for fishing, more especially as the river was lower than desirable. When after much time lost in preparations, everything was in readiness, he stepped forward, made one or two dexterous casts, and transferred the rod to Harry's hands.

There was a light breeze blowing, which came right from their backs, and the bank behind them rose slightly, and was adorned by a thick green fringe of juniper bushes. Harry gave one backward whip of the rod, and in a trice he was into them. He tugged and he pulled, but all to no purpose. The hook remained firmly secured, and refused to yield an inch. As the result of his first cast, the situation was decidedly mortifying, although not more so than might have been expected from a thorough tyro in the seemingly easy, but, in reality, most difficult art of throwing a fly.

Jens now came to the rescue and soon succeeded in freeing the hook. It seemed determined to catch *something*, for, all

at once, it swung round with the wind and fastened itself upon the spiky stalk of a tall, purple thistle.

"Deuce take the thing!" ejaculated Harry, not even attempting to conceal his vexation. But his troubles were not over yet; for in extricating the hook from the thistle, it became embedded in his light, woolly suit, and a knife had to be called into requisition to cut it out, making a nasty little jagged hole in the heather mixture.

Harry now recommenced his labours. This time he was determined to keep free of the bushes, and raised his rod up high, as if he wanted to castigate the heavens. He heard an ominous crack, but the line, borne by the breeze, flew softly down into the stream, and he congratulated himself on his prowess.

Feeling considerably more assured, he was on the point of making another cast, when Jens' deep bass voice interposed in a warning tone: "No good, no good. You 'ave lost one fly and one casting linie."

And sure enough, on inspection, this proved to be the case. His beautiful Silver Doctor was gone, carrying away with it some five feet of gut.

Another prolonged and vexatious delay now, of course, took place whilst the evil was being repaired. The best part of an hour had already gone by, and Mr. Farlow's fly had not once touched the water. If the fish did not take under such circumstances it was not much to be wondered at. When his rod was once more handed to him by the patient Jens, shame and mortification overpowered every other feeling. Harry's pride was humbled in the dust, and he could have shed tears of vexation at his own awkwardness.

"It's no use, Jens," he said sorrowfully. "I'm a most awful duffer, and know nothing whatever about fishing. You must teach me what to do, if you will."

Jens grinned from ear to ear. He was infinitely amused by all that had happened.

"*Ja, ja,*" he said, nodding his head with unusual vivacity. "Dat's it—duffer. Know noting. I vil show 'ow."

So ready an acquiescence in his confession of ignorance was a little trying to Harry's feelings, but he endeavoured manfully to conceal the discomposure that it occasioned.

Jens now took the rod from him, and made some half-dozen scientific casts.

"Dere!" he exclaimed at the end of them. "You see? It is no vere difficult."

"Yes, I see," responded Harry in crestfallen accents.  
 "But seeing's one thing and doing's another."

"*Di maa försöge.*" (You must try.)

And so our hero did, most patiently and perseveringly, with Jens standing behind him, grasping the rod at the same time, just as if he had been a little child, and teaching him the up-lifting previous to each fresh cast, which brought the fly to the surface of the water, the quick, backward jerk, the pause so as to let the line straighten well, and then the swift, gentle, forward motion, that sent it shooting forth again with graceful ease and precision. All this was not to be learnt in a day, but after a few minutes had elapsed, Harry mastered the elementary principles sufficiently to be able to cast by himself, albeit with a very short line. It remained a marvel to him how Jens could manipulate so many yards without becoming hopelessly entangled. For his own part, when he tried a longer line, he got into difficulties at once, and, by his counsellor's advice desisted in the endeavour until he should have grown more proficient. Jens let him splash away at the same spot for quite half an hour, just for the sake of practice.

The pool he had commenced by fishing was one of the best on the river. In the middle of it ran a strong stream, flanked on the far side by dark, smoothly swirling backwater, which shallowed off towards the bank in a bubbling series of crystal-clear eddies.

It required good long casting however; more especially in the present reduced state of the water, and Harry's fly never once succeeded in touching the spot where the fish lay. It only reached the near edge of the current, and then came drifting loosely back towards him. But Jens, having ascertained by this time how hopelessly inexperienced his pupil was, wisely determined to let him flop away for a while, and not spoil another good pool until he had improved a little in the art of casting.

The Sandéthal, though by no means what is generally termed a fine stream, was nevertheless a pretty fishing river. The banks as a rule were low, and not over-grown by trees. They were composed of tolerably sound turf, that offered a secure footing. The river itself was rapid, forcing its way through many rocks and boulders, and descending from one level to another by a series of small "Fos" (waterfalls), which however, were not of a sufficient height to offer any serious impediment to the passage of fish. It wound its tortuous way

through the narrow valley, reminding one of some living thing contending painfully with the mighty, opposing forces of Nature. Wherever it rushed past a sharp curve, there, as if weary of its foaming and troublous course, it formed into deep, slumbrous pools where the salmon congregated, though often they refused to take. It might have been a much better river than it was, but owing to Mr. Smutch not having bought up the rights of all the small farmers living on its banks, some of them had laid down salmon-traps, which greatly spoilt the fishery, as did also certain nets which they spread at the mouth of the river.

Nevertheless, the fish, though not so numerous as they might have been, if properly preserved, frequently ran very large, and on the previous year, Mr. Smutch had captured one of thirty-five pounds weight.

But the real sport did not begin till quite the latter end of June or beginning of July. The Sandéthal was in truth a late river. Of this fact however, Harry remained in total ignorance. He had everything to learn through personal experience. His friend had given him as few details as he well could, consistent with his object, of getting the river taken off his hands at a price far exceeding what he paid for it himself. He had gone on the principle of "least said, soonest mended," though he had been forced to draw the long bow somewhat, as regarded the probable take of salmon, in order to raise Harry's enthusiasm to the desired point. This result once achieved he had endeavoured to commit himself as little as possible. Meanwhile, Harry put down his unsucces not so much to lack of fish as to his inartistic casting.

He flogged on and on in the most painstaking manner, and continued to make good improvement. But although Jens congratulated him on his progress, it produced no results. The fish could not be coaxed.

He would have been ashamed to confess how desperately he yearned for a rise, or what life and spirit it would have infused into him; but Jens with rough-and-ready sympathy perhaps guessed something of his desire, for after a while he gave the signal to wind up, and led him on to the next pool, some forty or fifty yards further down the river, and consequently nearer the Fjord.

The spot now selected was wider but shallower than the last one. The water flowed from bank to bank, at a pretty even depth, over a stony bottom, which in places tossed it up into



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little white-crested wavelets, that coursed merrily along, splashing and breaking as they hurried to the sea. The bank was quite level, and free from every kind of obstruction. A more favourable place in which to try his skill could scarcely have been chosen for a novice. It was almost impossible for him to "come to grief."

Harry flung his fly into the water with more energy than grace. The current however soon sucked it down and kept the line taut. But when it swung round close under the bank, it slackened and dangled quite loosely. He was on the point of making another cast, when suddenly he felt a gentle tug.

"Jens, Jens," he shouted in his joy and his surprise. "I've got a fish! I've actually got one at last. Hooray!" And he gave a regular British cheer, that went reverberating from mountain to mountain.

"*Meget god, meget god!*" (very good), said Jens, with a broad smile of amusement, shooting from his mouth as he spoke, a dirty streamlet of yellow tobacco. "Keep rod up, ellers (or) you lose him to one certainty."

For Harry, in the delicious agitation of this supreme moment had put down the point, thereby causing the line to hang in a belly. Lucky was it for him that his prize, whatever he might prove to be, was well-hooked, otherwise most assuredly he would have escaped with his life.

"Is it a 'lax,' Jens? Salmon, Jens?" he called out, his countenance beaming with delight.

Jens shook his head and grinned from ear to ear. His sense of the ridiculous fairly conquered his natural politeness at last.

"No, no; not so big," he responded.

"A Lax-örret, then?" (Sea-trout).

"I not know," came the cautious reply. "You soon see on self."

## CHAPTER XVI.

### SEA-TROUT FOR SUPPER.

LEANTIME, neither a vanishing reel nor a bending rod be-  
okened the capture of a large fish. The former remained  
perfectly steady, and the latter was only agitated by a few  
ble little jerks. Harry, however, from his attitude and

expression might have been contending with a whale, or giving battle to a monster of the deep.

"I tink," suggested Jens, still struggling hard to retain his gravity, "better you reel up now."

His pupil obeyed orders docilely, and lo! spluttering and gasping, there appeared a small brown trout, only an inch or two longer than the fly he had had the greedy audacity to swallow.

"Now, Jens—now! Are you ready? Gaff him! cried Harry, in tones of intense excitement.

For all answer Jens seized the line between his huge finger and thumb, and giving it a contemptuous jerk, flicked the diminutive gormandizer on shore, where it lay panting out its poor little life in the sunshine.

Harry's delight was unbounded. He went down on his hands and knees before it, as if he were worshipping at the shrine of some fair goddess who held his heart captive.

"Brown trout, Jens?" he said interrogatively.

"Yes, stor (big), Fjeld-örret," replied that worthy, with the nearest approach to sarcasm of which he was capable.

"Capital!" exclaimed Harry, rubbing his hands together in his glee. He could hardly conceal his impatience whilst the great gillie, who was too big to be quick of movement, unless under the influence of some powerful excitement, was carefully taking out the hook, not with a view to sparing the trout's mouth, but to avoid ruffling the feathers of the Jock Scott, which he had selected in place of the lost "Silver Doctor."

This was no sooner done than Harry produced a fifty-pound weighing machine, wherewith to weigh his capture. At this Jens, quite unable to conceal his mirth, broke into a loud laugh. To him there was something exquisitely funny in the idea. He thought this "Engelskmand" must be "gal" (mad).

However, Harry proceeded all undeterred to ascertain the exact size of his prize. The result was a little disappointing, for, do what he would, he could not make the troutlet's weight more than five ounces.

But after all, what did that matter? It was his first fish—the first fish he remembered that he had ever caught in his life, and he thought almost as much of it as if it had been a forty-pound salmon. It inspired him with hope, and made him place that faith in his casting which he was just beginning to lose, when the welcome tug had come which at once changed

his mental attitude from the extreme of despondency to the height of satisfaction.

"Vi maa forsøge igjen, Jens!" he said, with the utmost eagerness, feeling as keen as mustard after his success.

"Yes, yes; try again. Dis time big 'lax' come."

Thus animated, Harry fished on steadily for quite an hour without seeing the sign of a fish, and this, too, in spite of the sun's brilliancy having become obscured by a rising mass of soft, grey, white-edged clouds. The water was now a much better colour for fishing, though not nearly so beautiful from an artistic point of view, the transparent green tint having disappeared and a darker one taken its place. Even Jens expressed himself surprised at the fish rising so badly, and made many surmises as to the reason.

"*Kanske* (perhaps) dere tunder in de air," he said, trying to make excuses for his beloved river.

"Very likely," answered Harry. "It's been hot enough all day for anything."

His fly was trailing loosely in the water, whilst he fumbled in his waistcoat pocket for a light to give to Jens, who, when he was not chewing tobacco, seldom had a pipe out of his mouth.

He had hardly spoken the words, when suddenly he felt a sharp jerk, and the next moment with a whirr and a click, the reel ran out some twenty or thirty yards.

"*Lax, Lax*," he shouted in a triumphant voice, tremulous with astonishment and joy.

"No, not *Lax, Lax-ørret*" (sea-trout), said Jens in reply, taking a long puff at his newly-lit pipe.

Harry never, in his whole life, spent such a glorious five minutes as those that ensued, and to render his triumph complete, whilst he was still battling with the fish, rather awkwardly it must be confessed, though entirely to his own satisfaction, who should appear upon the scene but Mr. and Mrs. Thompson, the latter looking particularly fresh and pretty after her long walk.

"Oh!" she exclaimed sympathetically. "I'm so glad you've caught one—so awfully glad!"

"I've caught *two*," said Harry unable to repress his pride. "But I can't talk, I've got all my work cut out before me to land such a monster. Oh! how he pulls! There he goes again," as the fish, who was beginning to get exhausted, made another bit of a run. "Dear, oh, dear! I do hope I shan't lose him. That would be too cruel."

Meanwhile Jens, perceiving that the contest threatened to become indefinitely prolonged, unless he came to the rescue, seized a favourable moment, and plunging into the water up to his knees, for all the world like a magnificent Newfoundland dog, with a rapid forward thrust of the gaff, drove the sharp point right through the fat, glistening sides of a fine sea-trout, and deposited him safely on the bank.

How describe Harry's ecstasy? His joy was almost infantine. In his youth and innocence, he had not as yet exhausted many pleasures. The keenness of first impressions still remained to him in most things.

Even Annie could not help smiling at his enthusiasm, whilst Mr. Thompson, from whose ungracious memory the recollection of marmalade and tinned tongue had already faded, stood by scornfully, and called him, under his breath, "a damned young fool."

Yet such "young fools" as he looked down upon and despised, come in for some moments of unqualified enjoyment, which those who consider themselves infinitely superior, have neither the luck nor the capacity to experience. Freshness of feeling is indeed one of God's best gifts, and one which we should admire rather than scoff at, because we ourselves are unable to lay claim to it, and are "blasé" and satiated with spurious pleasures.

Suffice it, that Harry's sea-trout weighed over four pounds, and filled him with transport. Had there only been an office within reach, he would have telegraphed off to Mr. Smutch on the spot, to inform him of the grand sport it had been his good fortune to obtain. For in this light he viewed it. But as wiring was impossible, by way of giving some outlet to the exuberance of his feelings, he presented Jens, as the aider and abettor of his success, with ten kroner; a sum which to that unsophisticated giant appeared so enormous, and at the same time so totally undeserved on his part, that he kept repeating to himself all the rest of the day:

"Engelskmand meget rig, meget, meget rig. (Englishman very rich, very very rich). Mange penge, (much money). Ikke fattig som Norskmænd. (Not poor, like Norwegians)."

Mrs. Thompson now volunteered to take the fish home in order that they might have it cooked for supper; a suggestion which met with general approbation. Nevertheless, Harry felt as if he should have liked to strangle the little moth-catcher, when he saw him walk off by his wife's side, and

calmly allow her to carry the sea-trout as if it were a matter of course that she should exert herself, whilst he did nothing.

He fished away for a long time, but never got another rise. However he was no longer disheartened, feeling, after the achievements of the afternoon, that he could well afford to rest upon his laurels. It was a red-letter day, destined ever to live in his memory.

The clear stream rippling swiftly past its emerald banks, the profusion of wild flowers that delighted the eye at every turn, the silver-barked birches peeling to the sun, the tiny fertile valley, hemmed in between huge walls of rock, and partly choked by moraines, the colossal mountains steeped in a profound blue haze, so blue that it was only a shade less intense than the sky, had photographed themselves upon his mind, with a vividness none the less great, because it was more or less unconscious, and had left behind an impression of rare pleasure and beauty combined, such as is not easy of attainment in any other country except Norway. When at last he shouldered his rod, and turned his footsteps towards home, he was as happy as a king and as hungry as a plough-boy. And at supper he was quite convinced of one thing.

Never in all his days had he tasted so superlatively excellent a sea-trout. Mr. Thompson might call it hard and dry, and "stodgy"—that was the word he used—if he liked, but Harry was firmly persuaded that so delicious a delicacy had seldom been offered for man's delectation. Annie sat and watched him with a half tender, half amused light in her large, eloquent eyes.

In some ways she felt years older than he; old enough most to be his mother. But then, he was free and untrammelled, and she was weighted with Ebenezer, in whose presence it was difficult to be either young or cheerful without giving offence.

A very, very heavy weight she had found him all that afternoon as she toiled wearily in his rear up one ascent after another, whilst he prosed on in his grating, monotonous voice about genuses and varieties, and things that she did not take the least interest in. It never seemed to occur to him that his listener might be bored. He took it for granted that what pleased him must please her as well.

Harry Hopperton's conversation was, as she had justly told him, frivolous. It was not distinguished for its wit, its bril-



liancy, or its erudition ; but it was natural and unaffected and she liked it a great deal better than she did Ebenezer's. It was terrible work always having knowledge, which you had no wish to acquire, thrust down your throat, without the slightest provocation.

She was not clever, and did not want to be clever, at all events where grubs and butterflies were concerned.

She admired them fluttering about the green fields in a state of nature, but she hated the very sight of them, stuck through with pins, and ranged in rows in camphorated boxes. And more than all, she detested a green gauze net, blue spectacles, and a white puggery. These things were simply insufferable in her sight—objects of ridicule and nothing else.

The evening passed off most harmoniously. Mr. Thompson had seen some very likely bushes during his peregrinations and was in an unusually good humour ; and although he advised his wife several times to go to bed early, he actually sallied forth about 10 p.m., leaving her alone in the society of Mr. Hopperton. This was an unexampled act of generosity and moderation on his part. But Harry's stores had come in most conveniently at supper-time. The sea-trout he did not appreciate, and eggs he looked upon as bilious things, not to be partaken of more often than once a day.

Therefore he would have made a very poor meal had it not been for the provisions provided by his enemy. He even began to think that there might be some advantages in Mr. Hopperton's presence. After his skirmish of the morning he felt confident of his power to keep Annie in order.

There was no harm in her really, not a bit. In his heart of hearts he did her that justice.

She just wanted looking after a little, and he believed he was capable of giving her the necessary supervision. If a man married a pretty wife, as he had done, he must pay the penalty of seeing her admired by other men, and as long as she was sensible, it did not so much signify.

Thus mused Ebenezer, being in that placid and easy-going frame of mind produced by a plethora of food and a full stomach, which tranquillized his nervous system.

To-morrow, when Digestion took her revenge, then he would probably sing a very different tune, but as he sallied out into the moonlit air, he was, for him, in a remarkably amiable mood.

A curious shyness seized Annie, when she found herself

alone with Harry. She, who was usually so ready of speech, could not find a word to say. Only she stole furtive glances at him, as they sat in the deepening twilight. Through the open casement and the pendulous leaves of the ash beyond, she could see the smooth Fjord lying like a sheet of polished silver, whilst the moon shone down upon it with her mystic rays, which wrapped a soft grey mantle round the dark mountains that surrounded it, and made it look like a lake, rather than an inland sea.

Their reflections lay sombre and agate-like on the smooth surface, seeming to sink far down into the unknown depths beneath. The silence, the stillness, the mysterious charm of the night, suddenly made her heart grow soft, with a rush of sorrowful and unsatisfied longing, sweet, yet painful. There was something—something growing up within it which she feared and could not understand, so exquisite was the joy, so keen and smarting the regret. The tears stole to her eyes. He had been watching her for some time, also with a feeling of emotion.

"Annie," he said. "Why are you crying? What's the matter?"

"No—nothing. I—I am a fool, that's all." And then with a choking sob she rushed from the room, leaving him full of wonder and amazement, as to what had come over her. Perhaps his own heart told him a little of the truth, for he heaved a sigh, but made no effort to detain her. They both meant to be so good, these young people, and were so afraid of getting led astray by some over-mastering impulse.

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## CHAPTER XVII.

### HUSBAND AND WIFE HAVE A FEW WORDS.

THE next day it was broiling hot. The sky presented an unbroken vault of cloudless blue, in the midst of which shone a glittering sun, whose rays were almost too strong to be pleasant, and which lit up the mountains with so intense and searching light that their great, bare sides looked as if they had been placed under a microscope. Every cleft, every crevice and indentation were visible to the naked eye, as they lay basking

in the brilliant sunshine. So delusive, indeed, was the optical effect, and so marvellously clear the atmosphere, that one might have fancied a ten-minutes' climb would land one on the topmost peak within sight.

In short, it was glorious weather for everything except fishing. The angler views such a day with detestation and despair, and spends the greater portion of his time in scanning the horizon, in the vain hope of discovering some approaching symptoms of rain.

Harry was the more disappointed, because after his success of the previous day, he felt tremendously keen to get to work again. At seven o'clock in the morning, Annie heard that sound so characteristic of every fishing establishment—namely, the harsh click of a reel when the line, hung out to dry overnight, is being wound up again.

Directly breakfast was over, he rushed out of the room to interview Jens, who was sitting in the porch, under the shade of the ash tree, with his accustomed pipe in his mouth, looking the picture of animal content, as every now and then he lazily brushed away a fly that insisted on settling on some sensitive part.

"Good morning," said Harry. "What say you to the day? Rather bright, isn't it?"

Jens, thus appealed to, rose from his seat and took a comprehensive glance around. He looked at the clear outlines of the hills, at the glittering Fjord, that, having forsaken its beautiful green garb, had now caught the reflection of the sky, and was, like it, a deep, pure blue; and lastly he turned his head and gazed up the valley, from whence what little wind there was, came every now and then in almost imperceptible puffs of warm languorous air.

A look of disgust stole over his face.

"No do for fishing," he said decidedly. "*Lax no spise* (eat) when *sol* (sun) so varm."

"Can't we even try?" asked Harry, with a feeling of blank disappointment.

Jens smiled indulgently, much as he would have smiled at a two-year-old child.

"Certainly, if you like, but no use, no good. *Lax vil ikke tage.*" (The salmon won't take.)

"Do you mean to say," exclaimed Harry ruefully, "that every time we have a fine day, I shall be obliged to kick my heels about doing nothing?"

"Need not kick 'eels. Stop 'ome, but no kick 'eels," said Jens in all good faith.

The absurdity of this answer curbed Harry's petulance. It made it appear in a decidedly ridiculous light.

"But I don't want to stop at home," he expostulated in a milder tone. "I can do that at Bryanston Square. I've come out here to enjoy myself, and I hope to get plenty of sport, else I might as well have remained where I was."

But Jens' knowledge of the English language, which was principally confined to fishing matters, did not appear sufficiently great to take in the purport of this sentence, which, moreover, was rapidly uttered. Too proud, however, to confess his ignorance, he fell back on an account of what other Englishmen did under similar circumstances, and how invariably in fine weather they had resigned themselves to the situation.

"Mr. Smutch, he never fish when 'sol' strong. Wait till six o'clock, den go out and stay till twelve."

"Did he, by Jove?" ejaculated Harry. "Ain't it almost too dark for the fish to see the fly so late at night, Jens?"

"Dey see fast enough if dey choose."

"But, Jens, what on earth am I to do with myself all day? It's such a long time to wait till six o'clock."

Jens thus despairingly appealed to, put on a grave face. He thought a moment, then remembering Harry's delight at the capture of the small trout, a happy inspiration came to his assistance.

"If like, can go to lake. Mange, mange (many) Fjeld-örret dere."

After some further conversation, during which Harry had the gratification of letting off a few of his stock Norwegian words with happy effect, though with execrable Cockney accent, he succeeded in eliciting from Jens that the proposition was, he should either ride or drive up to the lake, take luncheon with him, and fish his way home down the river in the cool hours of the evening.

This programme met with his hearty approval. He had no notion of sitting within doors idling away his time on so fine and tempting a day. An expedition was the very thing. Then it flashed across his mind how very much pleasanter and more sociable it would prove, could he but persuade the Thompsons to accompany him.

It was, of course, too much to hope—however he might desire it—that the little man should stay at home; but rather

than not have Annie, he was prepared to put up with his company. A *tête-à-tête* would have been more than delicious, but then—there was no knowing what might come of it. Temptations arose fast enough without courting them. He had an instinctive feeling that sooner or later he should find himself beset by danger.

Nevertheless, he lost no time in broaching the subject of the contemplated expedition to Mr. and Mrs. Thompson.

The latter clapped her hands approvingly, and at once exclaimed: "Oh! how delightful! A picnic out of doors on such a day as this will be simply heavenly."

Ebenezer screwed up his eyes, and with his usual spirit of contradiction, said:

"That's all very fine. Picnicing in the open air is well enough in theory. It sounds Arcadian to a degree, blue sky, bright day, green sward, improvised fare, &c., &c.; but in reality what does it mean? A hard, uncomfortable seat on the damp grass—grass always is damp—spiders crawling up your legs, ants and flies up your sleeve, caterpillars down your neck, a sun that roasts you, or a rain that drenches you, and a great deal of personal inconvenience, just for the sake of eating a very much worse meal than you would at home."

"Oh! never mind that for once," said Annie, a trifle impatiently. "What's the use of coming to a new country if we stick indoors, and don't see as much as we can of it when we get the chance?"

"I hate your regular sight-seer," he growled in reply. "Nothing annoys me more than to be taken for a tourist; besides, what about dinner—or rather supper? It seems to me one is supposed to live upon air in this blessed land."

"Say love rather, Mr. Thompson," chimed in Harry, with a smiling look at Annie. "I'm sure you can't require any other sustenance. As for supper, have it at what time you like, quite independently of me; but since I have ordered a trap for myself at any rate, it really seems a pity for you not to come."

Ebenezer's countenance relaxed a trifle. If he could order supper when he chose, that put a very different complexion upon matters, as did also the fact that Harry was prepared to pay the expense of the carriage, though the latter need not have been so much of a consideration had he known that in this remote part of Norway one could be obtained for the moderate sum of two kroner a day.

"How far off is the lake?" he inquired, beginning to yield



now that he thought sufficient importance had been attached to his consent.

"About one Norwegian mile, I believe."

"Oh! is that all? No distance. Why we could walk if it comes to that."

"Hardly, since one Norwegian mile is equivalent to seven English ones."

"Lor'! you don't say so? What a rum set of people they are, to be sure! They can't even divide their distances like Christians. Just fancy that! *Seven* English miles!"

"Yes, I think we'd better have the trap," said Harry good-humouredly. "We can let it wait all day, and then, if you and Mrs. Thompson get tired or hungry, you can jump into it and drive home."

"But what about yourself, Mr. Hopperton?" asked Annie, in a tone of soft concern, that sent a thrill through the young man's frame. "We could not desert you in so base a manner."

"Oh, I shall be all right. I am going to fish my way back, and you must not think of waiting for me. I'm sure to be late. Jens says the fish go on taking up till midnight."

Matters being thus arranged, the expedition was decided upon, much to Annie's delight. The next important question was, what were they to take with them in the eating way?

It may seem to the reader that these excellent people, having with much pain and travail transferred themselves into a foreign country, instead of assimilating new impressions and learning therefrom, did nothing but talk and think about their food. The recorder of this story is, above everything, anxious to make it faithful and true to nature, and what he shall eat and what he shall drink occupies so large a share of an Englishman's thoughts through life, and, moreover, has so much to do with his contentment, that the commissariat cannot be passed over in silence. Sport and food are his two ideas. Sometimes one predominates, sometimes the other, but on the whole they are pretty evenly balanced.

Mrs. Thompson came out grand on this occasion. She showed that she possessed fine practical qualities which, while adding to his comfort, are the surest method of appealing to a man's affection. The gentlemen had plunged into a lively discussion as to whether beer or whisky would be the best drink to take with them. Seeing that it was likely to prove a vexed question, Annie tripped off to the kitchen, wherein she had already made herself quite at home, brought back the

bread and the butter in triumph, and set to work cutting a quantity of slices. These she converted into dainty sandwiches by means of Harry's cold tongue, sardines and jam.

Fetching some clean white paper from her room, she proceeded to tie up with string several neat packages, and afterwards counted out four ginger-bread nuts for each person, which she treated in a similar manner.

"There!" she exclaimed brightly, when she had finished her labours. "Now we can defy Fate, or at any rate, starvation, until the evening."

"What a useful little woman it is!" murmured Harry, with a smile of thanks, as he pocketed the parcels she tendered. "I feel quite ashamed of having stood by and given you no help."

"Oh!" interposed Ebenezer. "It's a woman's work, not a man's." According to him, everything in life *was* a woman's work. The sex were only put into the world to fetch and carry for the stronger male, and save him trouble on every occasion. This was a point on which he held very distinct views. Slave, servant, bond-woman, and wife, these were the posts he considered his pretty little Annie ought uncomplainingly and submissively to fill.

What a pity for her that she possessed a high spirit and an inconvenient gift of perspicacity which made her see things in her light as well as his. However, she had the good sense to make no reply to her husband's speech, only she glanced at Harry and shrugged her shoulders ever so slightly. The action was more expressive than words.

When Harry left the room she also retired, in order to get ready for a start. Ebenezer had taken his packet of sandwiches without a word, but she expected no thanks from him, so was not surprised at his silence.

He, however, was far from satisfied with the portion allotted to him, though Annie had taken care that he should have more than his share, knowing that if his body was small his appetite was the very reverse.

Ebenezer, directly he found himself alone, took a cautious glance around the room, so as to make sure his movements were not likely to be observed, and walked on tip-toe to the corner cupboard, in which Harry's stores were kept. He took out the rolled tongue and cut himself a great, thick slice, taking care to dig out all the lean and leave the fat—which he did not like—behind. Then he opened the tin of gingerbread

nuts—also Mr. Hopperton's property—and slipped some half dozen more into his pocket.

He had a delicate digestion and it did not do for him to try it, by going too long without food. Little and often was the principle he approved of. As bad luck would have it, just at the precise moment when he had put his hand back into the tin and was about to take two or three additional biscuits, having tasted one and found it much to his mind, Annie called out from the adjoining bedroom—"Ebenezer, where did you put my parasol? You had it strapped up with your net." And without waiting for an answer, in she bounced, exactly when her presence could not have been less desired. A look of unutterable scorn broke over her honest young face, as at a glance she realized the situation.

"Oh! you greedy thing!" she cried impulsively, too thoroughly disgusted to consider her speech.

"Tut," he said, peevishly, turning a copper red. "Don't call names."

"If you weren't satisfied with what I gave you," she went on in her clear, ringing voice, "why did you not say so? You might easily have asked for more, when Mr. Hopperton was present, without stealing his things behind his back."

"D——n Mr. Hopperton. I don't want that young fool rammed down my throat. I've had enough of him as it is."

"But not of his gingerbread nuts," returned Annie, with biting sarcasm. "You appreciate the 'young fool's' eatables, even if you don't appreciate the 'young fool' himself. That's very evident."

He turned livid with passion. For a moment, he looked almost as if he were about to strike her.

"How dare you talk to me so," he screamed, in tones rendered shrill by rage.

"I am only speaking the truth. You can't deny it. You're greedy and you *were* stealing."

"I'm not doing any such thing, and even if I were guilty of the mean action you wish to fasten upon me, it is no business yours. You have no right to interfere."

"I can't stand by, Ebenezer, and see a wrong done under my very eyes, just as if I were an aider and abettor."

"Yes, that's it. You think only of yourself. You're *always* thinking of yourself, and don't care two straws about me."

"I don't see what the state of my affections for you, can have to do with Mr. Hopperton's gingerbread nuts," she retorted.

"Indeed! Would it surprise you very much to hear that your friend," placing a sneering emphasis on the word, "begged me, as a particular favour, to make any use I liked of his stores? There, Madam!"

This was an abominable fib, and Annie suspected that it was one, only she could not prove the suspicion.

Ebenezer, recovered from the first shock of discovery, was now assuming the high horse. Her countenance dropped a little. She had already some experience of the marvellous dexterity with which he could shuffle all blame from his own shoulders and make other people appear in the wrong.

"Oh!" she exclaimed in a milder tone. "I beg your pardon. Of course, if what you say is true, it makes all the difference. I was not aware that Mr. Hopperton had asked you to help yourself.

"It is not necessary for you to know everything," he retorted, congratulating himself on the happy effect of his imagination, which had once more enabled him to get the mastery over her; for instinct told him that if he succumbed to the present vigorous attack it would prove fatal to his marital authority hereafter. "And if I were you, Annie," he continued, "I should make quite sure another time, before flying out in this ridiculous manner, that your surmises are correct. I object to being called names without any reason." And he expanded his little, fragile form with a ludicrous attempt at dignity.

Poor Annie felt neither more nor less than a fool. Ebenezer appeared so completely to have vindicated his conduct, that it made her own seem hasty, ill-considered and unwifely. He fought with those killing weapons, cunning and hypocrisy, against which an upright, if impetuous nature cannot contend with any equality. And yet, the suspicion that he was not telling the truth still lurked in her mind. It was horrid of her to think so badly of her own husband. Why should she not believe him rather than hold him guilty of so mean, so despicable an action? The inherent wickedness of her nature must be responsible for this incredulity.

"I—I am very sorry, Ebenezer," she said humbly. "I am afraid I was a little too hasty."

"A little too hasty! I should rather think you were indeed a deuced long sight too hasty. However," patronizingly, "I hope this will be a good lesson to you, not to be so abusive in future."

"I did not mean to be abusive," she said with still deeper humility.

"I don't care whether you meant to be or not—you were ; and your conduct is the more unkind and inconsiderate, because you know how dreadfully delicate I am, and how extremely good anything containing ginger, is for the digestion. But you are as strong as a horse yourself, and don't know what it is to feel for other people, who have the misfortune to possess a less rude constitution."

Annie felt more and more rebuked. She had not a word to say in her own self-defence. Ebenezer thoroughly understood the art of humbling a vanquished foe. He regarded generosity in the conqueror as a contemptible weakness. And yet she would not have minded being scolded, if only she could have believed him ; but he resembled a snake in the grass, and was an impossible adversary to contend with. He presented so many fronts, and writhed and wriggled from one position to another with such ophidian-like slipperiness, that his audacity paralyzed whilst it fascinated her, and quite disabled her from entering the tortuous paths among which he effected an escape. The atmosphere was too foul. It choked her. Was she right or was he ?

A species of bewilderment stole over her brain. All the old landmarks of faith, honour, probity and truth, to which she had clung since her childhood seemed drifting away. Ebenezer's arguments and Ebenezer's example created an ethical revolution within her. Darkness succeeded to light, chaos to order. Right and wrong sounded like empty words, that got confusedly jumbled up at every turn through life. And the worst of the whole business was, it destroyed her own judgment and prevented her from any longer attaching value to it. She distrusted herself almost, though not quite as much as she distrusted Ebenezer. To this state had he reduced her pure young mind in something over four weeks. But the majority think not of these things. If the outward body present a fair, fat, flourishing appearance, they pause not to inquire after its spiritual welfare, or the impressions photographed upon the grey matter of the brain. And yet, how important the latter are, and what a conspicuous part they play in the shaping of a man's destiny.

At the age of twenty, when everything should have gone brightly and well with her, Annie was receiving painful impressions that, like some corrosive substance, were eating into the healthiness of her nature and casting a deep, black shadow



upon it. What did it all mean? Was it Fate, Destiny, gradual Evolution? Ah! who knows? No mortal can answer that question. Happiness expands the heart; sorrow and suffering sharpen the intellect. To those who possess the former, it is perhaps given to enjoy the world—to the latter, to improve it; and theirs is the nobler, though the more difficult part. Nevertheless, these things are mysteries which we cannot fathom. Annie was puzzled, dissatisfied and unconvinced.

She would have given everything she possessed on this earth to have been able to place faith in her husband's word. She could have overlooked his wretched physique, had his mind only presented some support on which she might lean, but to find it no better than a moral quicksand, a slough into which she sank at every step, was horrible—horrible—horrible!

For what could be more painful, humiliating and distressing to a woman, than having to live with a man whom she could not trust, who told her stories to her face, and whom she could not believe in any one particular? Yet this was what things had come to between Ebenezer and herself.

She had lost every particle of respect for him, and what might have developed into a friendly and amicable toleration was rapidly being converted into the fiercest hatred and repulsion.

She was as morally convinced that her husband had stolen Mr. Hopperton's gingerbread nuts as she was that there was a God overhead.

Her position seemed a terrible one, so full was it of despair, so destitute of hope. At twenty years of age to have your eyes thoroughly opened to the faults of the person with whom you were doomed to spend the remainder of your days was an appalling fact, full of exquisite misery and degradation.

For how could a woman exist thus, doing violence to her best and holiest feelings, and living a life of perpetual friction, suppressed rebellion and narrow bickering, without becoming degraded? It was not in nature. She must either grow hard, weak, or wicked; one of the three. If she grew hard, she might, at the same time, grow clever; brilliant to the world, but adamant in her own home. If weakness overtook her, then she would succumb to the miseries of her lot, and sink into a poor, insignificant thing, hopelessly deficient in spirit, too bruised and crushed to attempt any struggle, and if bad—but Annie refused to contemplate such a contingency. That secret shut up in her heart made her tremble. It made her

feel that if the temptation arose in all its overpowering strength, perhaps—perhaps she might yield. And she was frightened and awestruck to find Sin drawing so near to her, that she could actually contemplate it as a possible foe to be zealously guarded against. She had lost something of her purity already, and, poor thing, she knew it. Her conscience was too delicate and too sensitive not to hold her back at every downward step. With a groan, she retreated into her bedroom and looked at her pretty innocent face in the glass. She could not help seeing that it was attractive.

"Oh!" she sighed to herself. "How I wish I had been ugly, *very*, *VERY* ugly, then Ebenezer would never have taken a fancy to me and insisted on my being his wife. We are quite unsuited to each other. I told him so from the first, only he would not listen, and now, oh, my God, my God! what misery for both of us!"

She fell on her knees by the bedside and sobbed as if her heart would break. It was so soon to get to hate him—so soon after their marriage, and this other feeling that during the last few days had grown up within her, intensified and aggravated her sufferings, making regrets for the past so keen, prospects for the future so black and dreary. She almost wished she had never seen him, for then his blue eyes and frank fair face could not have worked the mischief that they had done. But it was too late now—too late. The iron had entered into her soul, and he might forget her, but she could never forget him. Oh! the pity of it! the pity of it!

She was so much upset that she seriously thought of pleading a headache, and not starting on the expedition, but reflection showed that any such message was likely to create an awkward *tête-à-tête* between her husband and Mr. Hopperton. Therefore she controlled her emotion, wiped away the traces of tears and finished dressing. When she emerged from her room, pale, but composed, it would have been difficult to guess that she had just passed through one of the most trying crises of her life. But thus it is ever with women. They weep their hearts out one minute and present to the world, the next, a cold and indifferent front.

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

## A RIDE IN A "STOLKJÆRRE."

"WHAT a devil of a time you've been," said her husband impatiently. "What on earth have you been about? You have kept us waiting ever so long."

"I'm sorry," she said shortly, addressing the apology, not to him, but to Mr. Hopperton, who stood near.

"Oh! never mind," exclaimed Harry, cheerfully. "I'm afraid you've been hustled a bit, as it is, and, really, there is not the slightest hurry. We have all the day before us." Then he bent his fair head, smiled into her eyes, and added in a lower voice: "It strikes me we shall require the pot of marmalade, eh?"

She blushed a deep crimson. She knew that he was referring to her own words and to Ebenezer's temper. The little party were now all congregated, and consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Thompson, Harry, and last, but by no means least, Jens, who was armed with a trout rod and a salmon rod, a large net, a rush fishing basket, bound with leather, wherein to stow away the spoils of the day, and a stout, steel gaff for the *stor lax* that was to be taken in the evening, when the fiery sun had sunk to rest.

Before the door stood a small wooden cart, drawn by a substantial dun-coloured mare, who was lazily blinking her eyes and switching her long tail, whilst by her side gambolled the sweetest, merriest, furriest-coated little foal ever seen. He had four great, strong legs, big enough, almost, for a horse, and a short, compact body, and a bright blue eye, alert, yet mild, set in a small, daintily set-on head, which he carried with the pride and freedom of a stately stag, and he was as full of play and as graceful in his movements as a young kitten. First he hid his pretty white nose under his mother's quarter, then he advanced step by step, and stared with infantine wonder at the strangers whose costume and language were unfamiliar to him, his curiosity gradually overpowering his timidity.

"Oh, you darling!" exclaimed Annie, enthusiastically. In her earlier youth she had ridden a good deal, and was passionately fond of horses.

The little fellow seemed emboldened by her praise, for he came still nearer, and allowed her to stroke his soft, rough

neck. Annie rushed off into the sitting-room to fetch him a lump of sugar, but to this delicacy he was evidently not accustomed. He sniffed at it once or twice, took it daintily up between his flexible lips, but let it fall almost immediately to the ground.

Harry had had no experience hitherto of the native "Stolkjærre," and in ordering a vehicle of Herr Christian, to be ready at a certain hour, he had taken it for granted that he would provide one capable of holding four persons. His imagination had pictured a roomy, if somewhat antiquated fly, with comfortable cloth cushions, and a hood to put up in case of rain. Ignorant young man!

The conveyance he now saw did not at all realize his expectations. It was evidently a perfect impossibility for four great, grown-up people to cram themselves inside a diminutive carriage, that was little, if any, bigger than an ordinary English donkey-cart, without half its accommodation, and very much ruder in construction. The "Stolkjærre" had two wheels and was composed entirely of wood, which once, long ago, had received one coat of bluish-grey paint, but which Time and hard wear had now reduced to a series of indefinite-coloured streaks. A wooden bench, minus any cushion, capable of seating two persons and ornamented by a low railing of the same material, ran across the centre of the cart.

This seat was sustained at a certain elevation by two bands of very rusty iron, that looked as if they had been torn from some old cask or packing case. These were fastened to the shafts by nails, and, meeting two similar bands secured at the back of the vehicle, were joined together under the seat, by a hinge improvised out of an iron loop. The loop was so loose and so roughly constructed that it kept up a rattling, clinking, clanking accompaniment to every motion of the pony, and threatened momentarily to fall asunder.

This primitive piece of workmanship constituted the springs—if springs they might be called.

As a matter of fact they were worse than none, as the rider soon discovered.

After some deliberation on the part of our friends, who, gazing at the "Stolkjærre" in dismay, sent for Herr Christian, but were informed that his establishment boasted no other vehicle—it was suggested by Jens that he should walk on, whilst Mr. Thompson, being a light weight, should dispose of his person as best he could at the bottom of the cart at the back.

Ebenezer did not at all approve of this arrangement. He had a notion that wherever he was, and no matter in what company, he should always get the best of everything. He therefore coveted the front seat, and proposed that Annie, being the smallest, should go behind, attributing his motive to one of humanity for the mare; but Harry grew so indignant at the mere suggestion, that Mr. Thompson, knowing nothing of driving, was obliged to yield the point, though far from gracefully.

At length all was ready for a start, and whipping up the sluggish, mild-tempered mother, they commenced their journey, accompanied by the foal, who was wonderfully active on his legs, and skipped along in the most light-hearted fashion; now trotting on ahead a hundred yards or so, then cantering back to see why his dam was so long in following his example, greeting her with little snorts of recognition as she rejoined him.

But oh! what a journey that was!

Nobody not intimately acquainted with the peculiarities of a springless "Stolkjærre" can have the slightest conception of the way in which our compatriots were bumped, jolted, and rattled-rattled, jolted and bumped until every bone in their bodies ached, and bruise after bruise was inflicted by the hard wooden railing, as they were rolled or forcibly thrown against it.

The road, which on first leaving Sandéthel had been tolerably good, soon became worse and worse. In many places the light sandy soil was churned up into deep ruts, in others great layers of natural rock projected. Then there were bridges with loose planks to be passed over, and streamlets without any bridges whatever, into which the mare plunged, and scrambled out with an effort. Bogs too, by way of a diversity, and holes in plenty, whilst loose stones, that at various times had rumbled down from the mountains, lay about in appalling profusion. Appalling, because each one was a separate torture to the unfortunate riders of the "Stolkjærre." Harry did his very best to avoid them, but if he tried to get out of the way of some particularly awkward boulder, then up went the wheel on the opposite side over another, which, in his anxiety to clear the first, he had not seen. Then down again came the cart, with the most frightful jerk, and the seat grew harder and harder every moment, until at last it became simply insufferable, and no shift of position gave any ease. At one moment,



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Harry and Annie collided with tremendous force, and whilst they were still begging each other's pardon, for what neither could help, they were shot as violently against that detestable iron spring, which alone prevented them from falling over the side. The rust came off and ruined their clothes, but that was a matter of minor importance in comparison with the bodily pain—for it far exceeded mere discomfort—they were forced to endure.

And all the time creak creak, jingle jingle, clatter clatter, went those abominable old hinges, which were responsible for half their misfortunes. Nothing in their experience equalled, nor approached this native cart. The worst four-wheeler that ever rattled the streets of London was heavenly in comparison.

As for poor, delicate, Ebenezer, who found it necessary on all occasions to take such good care of himself, on account of his precarious health, he thought that he would have died on the spot. He commenced by grumbling. But that was quite useless. His little shrill voice was drowned by the music of the "Stolkjærre," then he took to swearing viciously, and finally he was reduced to a state of abject silence. It can be understood from this last result how bad things were.

Once, when a peculiarly distressing bump had occurred, even more agonizing than its numerous predecessors, Annie ventured to address her lord and master.

"How goes it with you, Ebenezer?" she inquired. "This ought to be splendid for your liver. Horse exercise is not to be compared with it. Oh, take care, Mr. Hopperton, there's another great stone just in front."

"Don't talk to me!" snapped the little man back in reply. "I don't believe—my nervous system will ever recover from the effects of this most horrible drive. I only wo—wonder a 'Stolkjærre' was not included amongst the instruments of torture of the Spa—Spanish Inquisition."

This sentence was jerked out between the jolts, with much labour and difficulty; after it, he relapsed into his former state of sullen endurance. To make matters worse, too, it appeared likely that they would take a very long time *en route*! After starting gaily at a trot, they soon found it impossible to maintain this rate of speed, both on account of the exquisite torture it put them to, and the extreme laziness of the mare. At the least incline, she fell back into the slowest of walks, and as the road was uphill nearly all the way, it followed as a matter of course that they did not progress very fast.

On the whole, however, they were content to let Thekla—for so she was named—proceed at her own pace, discovering that the slower they went, the less violent was the motion of the “Stolkjærre.” The only time when Thekla showed any inclination to increase her speed was on coming to a descent. For these she evidently entertained a great partiality, breaking into a trot of her own accord, but she did not keep it up long, and soon relapsed into her accustomed crawl, in which she seemed to think she had a prescriptive right to indulge, without any reference to the driver.

Thus Jens, with his great, long legs and elastic stride, had no difficulty in keeping up with the party. The road was very beautiful, only they were too miserable physically to bestow much of their attention upon the scenery. As they ascended, the valley gradually grew narrower and narrower, until it became little more than a deep ravine, through which the river foamed in a series of falls and rapids, now flowing swift and smooth between straight walls of rock that hemmed it in on either side, and forced its waters into a small compass, anon widening, and tumbling all white and disordered over the great black boulders that lined its bed. Jens pointed out one place which had been a very good salmon pool for many years, but which was now quite ruined, owing to a mighty fall of stones from the mountains in the winter, that had completely changed the river's course.

“Do you often have such falls?” asked Harry, rather astonished at the mischief worked by these destructive forces. “If so, this must be rather an unpleasant place to live in.”

“‘Somertiden’ (sometimes),” answered Jens; “but not so often as all dat. Stones fall in de winter, after frost and snow, or again when dere is big storm, ‘torden og lynild’ (thunder and lightning) in de mountains.”

Involuntarily as he spoke these words, they glanced up with a feeling of awe at the great, towering hills, whose dazzling helmets of spotless snow seemed boldly to challenge the white clouds that hovered near them, and whose purity of colouring was not more chaste than their own. In some instances, indeed, the lofty, snow-crowned summits, and the airy cirrus clouds were so blended, that it required an experienced eye to distinguish them apart. In either case, their effect against the fathomless blue back-ground was equally sharp and clear, and charmed the senses by a certain noble serenity and tranquil majesty.

As they jogged along, the tinkling of sheep-bells in the distance kept up a pastoral accompaniment, to which was added the hoarse chatter of black and white magpies, that seemed to have taken up their residence in almost every bush, and the loud barking of some lean, long-haired sheep dog, who, rushing out from his cottage home, with wagging tail but warning voice, pursued the "Stolkjærre" a hundred yards or so, until he had seen it safely off the premises. Then he assumed a stately walk, and finally halted in the centre of the dusty road, waiting for his recent foes to disappear from vision.

They passed many women labouring in the fields, clad in short petticoats and white blouses—for the day was hot. Others were washing out their milk-pans before their doorways, and setting the clean tin dishes to dry in the sun. An old dame, wearing the flat white national head-gear, stiffly starched, and lending a borrowed cleanliness to her venerable face, might be seen sitting on some green knoll, with her knitting pins in her hand, surrounded by a whole host of little blue-eyed, flax-haired grandchildren, who, attentive and open-mouthed, listened to the story of the heroes who used to inhabit their native land, which she was telling them in her guttural, sing-song tones. And the sun glinted down on the children's fair heads, whose hair it had bleached to a whitey-gold, and glanced off the old dame's knitting pins as they hurried in and out the thick stocking she was engaged upon, and the cocks and hens crooned around, as if they too were part of the family, and Lars, the sheep-dog, conscious of his good services, came back and looked at them with friendly eyes, and licked the little ones' small, grimy hands as they patted him on the head. For everywhere in Norway the kindness with which dumb animals are treated is the same. They are the friends and familiars, not the servants as with us, and the result is seen in the wonderful sagacity of their ponies and of their cows, who at the first sound of "Kyjradn, Kyjradn" (little cows, little cows), from the "Sæter" girls, come wending their way home.

On the green banks which bordered the road grew harebells and buttercups, big, yellow-hearted daisies, wild honeysuckle that filled the air with its fragrance, and dog-roses bursting through their pink-tinted buds, until their delicate petals lay open to the sun. The contrast between the fertility of the valley and the aridness of the mighty hills was very striking, and seemed to add to the beauty of each. When the eye wearied of so much grandeur and vastness, then it turned

with pleasure to the green fields and dells to the tall, waving grasses, and the brilliant stores of wild flowers which made the very breath of Nature sweet. It took delight in the yellow-bodied bumble-bee, diving into one honey-laden cup after another, in the zigzag flight of the white-breasted water-ousel as he skimmed along the river in the fluttering brightness of the leaves and the chequered shafts of light which they cast tremulously on the ground. Big things and little things, dead things and living things, you felt that they were all beautiful in their way, and exquisitely fashioned by a creative force before which, call it Deity, Nature, First Cause, Principle of Life, Protoplasm and Atoms—what you will, man must necessarily fall down and worship.

As our countrymen continued their journey, going still more slowly now, on account of the hilly nature of the road, they passed many peasants, some walking, some riding in long, low carts, made of three or four planks of wood placed lengthways, and simply bound together. They were mostly attired in dark trousers and red flannel shirts, that stood out in the distance as a brilliant spot of colour, and their heads were covered by soft felt hats, much the same shape as those affected by the Irish. Their uniform politeness and natural good manners made a great impression upon Harry, who was accustomed to London "roughs" of socialistic tendencies.

Not a soul met them on the road who did not greet them with a cordial "God-dag" (good-day), said as if it were meant, and accompanied by a pleasant smile. The natives would draw their little carts right up the bank, and almost upset them in their endeavours to leave sufficient room for the "Engelskmand," who had taken the "Elv," and his friends to pass by. Then, before moving on, they would stop Jens, and exchange a few hasty sentences as to the doings of the strangers, and the sport they had had since their arrival.

Harry was infinitely amused and rather taken aback when he presented a pretty little flaxen-haired girl of about six, with a ten-öre piece—a penny farthing—to find the wee mite suddenly stretch out a grubby paw, and shaking him vigorously by the hand, say: "Tak, mange tak!" (Thanks, many thanks), with such earnest gratitude and effusion, that he felt ashamed to think how small was the donation which called forth so much warmth on the part of the maiden. He afterwards discovered that this was a custom—and a very pretty, touching one, too—common to all Norwegians when they receive any

thing partaking of the nature of a present. Even Jens gave him a mighty hand-shake, and uttered a gruff "Tak" when, at the end of the week, he paid him his wages.

That excellent man had disappeared. He had stopped at a cottage by the roadside to give instructions as to the regular delivery of wild strawberries, cranberries and bilberries, directly they were ripe. In a country where all vegetables, except potatoes and onions, are excessively rare, they form not only a very welcome, but also a very wholesome addition to the daily fare, and Harry had stated that he wished all the little boys and girls of the neighbourhood encouraged to bring in fruit.

Therefore, the "Stolkjærre" contrived to gain upon Jens. They had just toiled up a steep ascent, the foal looking back at its mother, as if to reproach her for her sluggishness, whilst she, in answer to his appeal, and seeing a satisfactory declivity, roused herself, sufficiently to break into a rattling trot. They were bowling down the hill at quite ten miles an hour when suddenly she came to a dead stop. Harry, thinking this was sheer laziness on her part, raised the whip and gave her a smart stroke.

She only shook her head deprecatingly, as much as to say, "Foolish man, be quiet," and refused to budge an inch.

He was about to repeat the castigation in a severer form, when Annie called out:

"Don't beat her, poor thing. There is something wrong with the harness. We are all down on one side."

And sure enough, when he came to look, the left shaft had given way and was only about a quarter of a yard from the ground. Had not Thekla stood so still, they might all have been precipitated into the road.

Harry jumped out to try and repair the mischief, but he did not know much about harness, and all the queer little bits of old string, odds and ends of rope, and iron chains with loosely riveted links, confused him sorely.

"Something has gone wrong, that's quite clear," he said, "but I'm not man enough to put it right, and I think we had better wait till Jens comes. He can't be very far behind."

As he spoke Jens appeared, bounding over the rocks like a hamois, having taken a short cut. To Harry's relief he treated the disaster with the utmost nonchalance and as if it were an every-day occurrence, which indeed it proved to be. Jens took from his pocket a large clasp-knife, cut a tolerably



thick piece of wood from the nearest tree, pruned it into shape, and then inserted the peg thus manufactured, into the iron hole in the shaft, in the place of the one that had either broken or slipped out.

Then he examined the remainder of the bit of string, but finding it too short for his purpose, and extremely rotten into the bargain, he produced a longer and a stouter piece, and repaired the evil after orthodox Norwegian fashion.

Mr. Thompson watched the operation with distrust and alarm. When he saw on what slender materials his safety depended, he vowed nothing should ever make him enter the "Stolkjærre" again, and it was only when Jens soothingly assured him they were close to the lake that he reconsidered his determination, and was once more induced to entrust his precious life to a wooden peg and a bit of string. But he did so under protest. The thing was not to his liking—far from it.

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## CHAPTER XIX.

### A DAY'S TROUTING.

FIVE minutes more of jolting and bumping, verified Jens' words, and brought them to the lake. At this point the road, which for some time past had been little more than a mountain track, stony to a degree, and every here and there deeply indented on either side, ended abruptly. Its further course was rendered impossible by the precipitous nature of the great bald hills that confronted it.

Our compatriots gladly descended from the "Stolkjærre," and Harry assisted Jens to unharness Thekla and remove her from between the shafts. She was then hobbled and turned out to graze amongst the scanty pasturage until her services were required again. After this, Jens went inside a rude and solitary cottage, more roughly constructed than any they had yet seen, and fetched the oars belonging to the boat, which were left in charge of a very old and infirm man.

Meanwhile Harry put on his casting-line and fly, having already become considerably more expert. The next process consisted in shoving the boat down the stony ledge on which it lay into the lake. It took two men to do this, as she was half-full of water, purposely kept there to preserve her timber

rom shrinking. Jens at once began baling her out with a short, wooden shovel that did duty as baler, and in the handling of which he was extremely expert.

She proved to be a very cranky craft, for though built of good pine-wood, varnished over with a yellow varnish, her planks were so extremely thin that the slightest movement made her wobble about in a most unpleasant and insecure fashion. A very little would have capsized her altogether. It was also discovered that the hot sun had sprung a seam, and in consequence she leaked considerably. Jens tried to plug her with a bit of cork, but still the water kept accumulating by degrees, and necessitated an occasional stoppage.

Mr. Thompson, having with the eye of a field-marshal at once taken in the advantages and disadvantages of the situation, got in first, and ensconced himself at the bow. Here he was out of the wet, and laying his rug on the planks at the bottom, reclined there full length, with a proud consciousness that after putting up with a back seat in the "Stolkjærre," he was fairly entitled to have the best of it. His wife went to the stern. Harry occupied the place immediately facing her, and Jens—who proved a first-rate sculler—disposed of his mighty person on the bench behind, which creaked under his weight as if it would give way altogether.

Once fairly settled in their seats, they rowed off from the shore.

The lake was comparatively a small one, being not more than three English miles long, and narrow in proportion. It looked even narrower than it really was, owing to the stupendous height of the almost perpendicular cliffs that walled it in, and whose lofty pinnacles of pure gneiss testified to their extreme antiquity. Scarred and seamed they were, with many a cicatrice inflicted by Time and the elements; yet there they remained, solid and steadfast, enduring from age to age, out-living generation upon generation of human beings, and still bearing the evidences of that gigantic glacial friction which, many thousands of years ago, had first torn them asunder, and then rounded their angularities into a semblance of smoothness.

Not a green thing grew on them, save here and there a patch of pale spongy lichen, or a few blades of coarse grass, which clung to their naked surface with the desperate tenacity of life maintained hardly, amidst uncongenial surroundings. And even where any vegetation managed to obtain a footing, its sparse verdure did but render the contrast between it and the

grey, sterile heights the more apparent. Its scantiness, instead of diminishing, did but add to the barren loneliness and grandeur of the scene. A geologist could almost have counted the different strata of granite, gneiss, mica, quartzite, and dolomite of which these mountains were composed.

Immense glaciers rested near their summits, unknown and unexplored expanses of greenish ice and dazzling snow, whose size could not even be guessed, at the distance from which they were viewed. Here the eagle soared, in unmolested solitude, and the brown bear wandered at his will, whilst at a somewhat lower altitude ptarmigan, white as the snow on which they rested, fed and thrived. So tall, indeed, were the mountains, and so narrow and confined the lake, that after two o'clock the sun never penetrated, and in winter the inhabitants lived month after month without once being gladdened by a sight of it. No wonder that, according to Jens, many of them at this season suffered from an unconquerable depression of spirits, which not infrequently led to suicide.

To-day the surface of the lake was black and still, except right in the very centre, and here one long line of golden light that escaped through the valley higher up flooded the dark waters with an amber radiance, and by its fire and force kissed them into glittering, if reluctant brilliancy.

Weird, sombre, and monumental was the effect of these magnificent rocks, rising crag upon crag, peak upon peak, and which even so serene and glorious a summer's day failed to divest of their dreary and desolate character. They were in nature what some rare men are in life. Too grand for their surroundings, and forced through their very nobility to stand alone.

The deep shadow which rested on the greater part of the lake was, however, extremely grateful to our excursionists. It seemed like entering into some quiet haven, that cooled and refreshed the eye, after the sun's hot glare outside this mountain fastness. Jens found it warm work, though he rowed steadily on with the perseverance that was a part of his character. Nevertheless he was glad to pause every now and then, when the leaky state of the boat gave him an excuse to exchange one form of labour for another, and to wipe his honest, perspiring face with a bright cotton pocket-handkerchief.

"Aren't we going to fish?" inquired Harry a trifle impatiently, after some time had gone by, and the object of the

day appeared to him forgotten. "Time is getting on," taking out his watch, and glancing at it regretfully. "It only wants ten minutes to twelve."

"Yes," answered Jens, with his accustomed calm; "but not 'ere. No good. Water too deep. Must row to top of de lake first. Den begin to fish."

"Is it shallower there?"

"Yes, much shallower. Where river run in—best part. Trout take dere, if dey take anywhere."

Thus reassured, and Ebenezer, after the fatigues and discomforts he had so recently undergone, having dropped off to sleep in the most obliging manner, Harry leant forwards, clasped his hands over his knees in an attitude of lazy enjoyment, and preferring a pretty woman to the most glorious scenery in the world, gazed steadily at Annie. She was looking very "fetching" in a pink cotton gown that fitted her to perfection, and a sailor hat which suited her round, roguish young face most admirably.

Yet it was not roguish now, but wore a wistful expression, of which, while he looked, he became gradually aware. It suddenly struck him that she had altered a good bit in the last week.

"Annie," he said, in an undertone, considerably desiring to avoid disturbing Ebenezer's slumbers, "you don't look as if you were enjoying yourself one bit."

"Oh, yes, I am!" she answered quickly. "One can enjoy oneself in a quiet way without always laughing and talking, and making a noise. There was a man on board the *Fjalia* who kept on saying, 'Oh, how grand! Oh, how lovely! Oh, how sublime!' I don't believe he appreciated the scenery half so much, really, as the people who said nothing. Gush does not necessarily mean appreciation."

"Perhaps not," said Harry. "But it's no use trying to put me off like that. I can see quite well that you are down in the dumps to-day."

"How very trying always to be expected to be up on the heights," she retorted, with an attempt at playfulness. "Don't you know that it is an immense luxury to indulge in low spirits now and again?"

"Very likely, but low spirits are not natural to you."

"I imagine they are not natural to anybody. They are an unhealthy growth, forced upon people by disappointments, disillusion, circumstances, and ill-health."

"You would not talk like that if you were yourself. Tell me, Annie, what is the matter? I can't bear to see you out of sorts."

"Thanks; you are very kind to take so great an interest in my mental condition, though the windings of a woman's mind are not worth bestowing much attention upon."

"Come, make a clean breast of it," urged Harry. "Has anything fresh happened?"

"No," she responded, somewhat constrainedly; "not that I am aware of. What should happen?"

"Oh! I didn't know," he said apologetically. "At any rate, I'm glad to hear it was only my fancy."

"It! What?"

"That you and Mr. Thompson have had another row."

She took no notice of the remark, beyond colouring a little and preferring, seemingly, to answer his former observation, said:

"Nothing ever does happen. I wish to goodness it would."

This desire, which was warmly expressed, so entirely coincided with Harry's own state of feeling only a few months previously, that he could not help sympathizing. His eye sought hers, and he said in an earnest tone:

"Annie, tell me. What would you like to happen? Perhaps I could gratify your wish."

Suddenly her lip quivered and she turned very pale. Involuntarily she glanced at Ebenezer, lying full length on his back, with his sallow, unkindly face turned up to the blue sky. A shudder ran through her veins, for in her own mind she knew quite well what it was that she wanted. It was her husband's death! But, oh! the wickedness of it—the odiousness of it! She lifted up her eyes with a sense of deadly shame, and those great, grey sentinels overhead, who had defied so many hostile influences of wind and weather, seemed in their still serenity and enduring vastness to rebuke her warring human passions. They humbled and dwarfed them. A fresh wave of thought swept through the chambers of her mind.

Supposing her desire were gratified, and Ebenezer out of the way, and supposing she married Harry Hopperton? Would he love her as she loved him? She doubted it. Men never did shower all the treasures of their heart upon a single person as did foolish women. They always had a reserve fund somewhere for another. Marriage was only an incident of a man's



life, *the great event* of a woman's. Naturally the sexes looked upon it from different points of view. Something in her heart warned her even now that Harry's admiration was not a genuine emotion, however much he himself might believe it to be so. She sighed, and yet her sense told her it was a good thing. A good thing for him and for her too, when she could reason out matters calmly. But that time had not yet come. She was struggling in a whirlpool of tumultuous passion, and knew not whether she would sink or rise. The strong current had her in its power, and at present swayed her to and fro in every direction.

Harry's eyes were still fixed on her troubled countenance.

"Annie," he said, "you have not answered my question. Will you not tell me what you want to happen?"

"What we want is nearly always imaginative, nothing more nor less. Strong wishes display a diseased state of the brain," she replied equivocally.

"Dear me! How very sententious we have grown all of a sudden."

"Sententious or not," she went on, "Reality seldom answers Expectation, and even if it did, the probabilities are, it would not prove for our good."

"That is a trite reflection, Mrs. Annie," he said playfully. "Why this moralizing mood?"

"Because I have often thought that if we had it in our power to shape our own lives, we could only fashion them piece-meal as it were, and consequently, when we came to the end of them, we should discover to our consternation that the whole was anything but harmonious."

"That may be. You've certainly contrived to make a pretty mess of *your* life."

The words were blurted out impulsively and without consideration. It was impossible to take offence at them, and yet they contained an element of blunt frankness that made her wince. She blushed scarlet.

It was not pleasant hearing home truths, but more especially when they were uttered by one who, in the last few days, had effectually contrived to make her realize the full extent of her fiasco.

She drew herself up with an air of dignity more assumed than natural. They had already exchanged too many confidences not to render an expression of opinion permissible, even although it might not be a wholly agreeable one. Annie

felt and knew this in her secret consciousness, though she still strove to keep up appearances.

"I cannot prevent your forming any conclusions that you please," she said, "but I am sure, Mr. Hopperton, that on reflection, you will agree with me in thinking it better taste to keep them to yourself."

H. flushed crimson, coughed uneasily once or twice, but did not attempt to reply. She had given him a regular slap on the face, but he could not complain. He had brought it upon himself. He had had no business to make the remark, and she justly resented it as an impertinence.

As if by mutual accord, they relapsed into silence. It was as profound as if Ebenezer had been doing Duenna, instead of emitting mysterious nasal noises from the bow of the boat.

Yet, oddly enough, although Annie knew she had behaved with remarkable decorum, she was very far from being satisfied with the result of her conduct. It seemed such a waste of time to sit still and not talk when they got the chance. Their opportunities of conversing in freedom were growing rarer and rarer. Ebenezer seldom relaxed his guard so effectually.

"What did I want to snap at him like that for?" she mused discontentedly. "I have offended him without any just cause, and now both of us are miserable. And to make matters worse, we have not many days left in which to enjoy ourselves. We shall soon be going away, and then—and then," with a sudden heaving of her bosom, "I may never see him again as long as I live."

The tears started to her eyes at the thought, for she was at that tender and trusting age when a woman believes nothing on earth can compare with the love of man. Experience had not yet taught her its fickleness, its lightness, and instability, else she might not have prized it so highly.

Harry also gave himself up to reflections of an unpleasing nature.

"It was a caddish thing of me to say," said his inward monitor. "She was quite right to fly out at me in the way she did. Dear little thing! I like her all the better for trying to hide her unhappiness. It shows that she has a brave spirit of her own, and refuses to be pitied, even by me."

Meanwhile they had almost reached the head of the lake, where the mountains were a trifle less precipitous, and stingily yielded room to the little valley, with its twisting river, which wound round their broad bases. The latter was now nothing

more than a rocky streamlet, but its banks were exquisitely verdant, starred with buttercups and daisies, harebells and fox-glove, and one or two solitary white cottages peeped out from their homely patches of wheat, barley, and dark green potato. The sun now, escaping from the thralldom of the mighty hills, shone out brilliantly and once more cheered their spirits by its bright rays.

"You may begin fish," said Jens, laying in his oars for a few seconds, while he prepared another pipe. "Good place 'ere. Mr. Smutch—'ee catch many örret in dis place."

It was a little sheltered bay, whose sandy beach sparkled in the sunlight, and formed a yellow line of colour, that stood out clear and sharp against an emerald background of tall reeds, tufted rushes, marsh-mallow and soft moss, interspersed here and there by a few woolly balls of the white cotton plant, which betrayed the swampy nature of the soil on which they grew.

As Harry took the rod in his left hand, he stretched out the right to Annie, with an air of repentance which went straight to her heart.

"Dear," he said softly, accompanying the words with a persuasive glance, "I ought not to have said what I did. It was neither kind nor generous. Will you forgive me?"

Forgive him! Oh! if he only knew how unhappy she had been at even this light cloud rising between them. She could bear anything, rather than quarrel when they were going to part so soon.

She placed her hand in his, and let it lie there, whilst she looked up into his face with shining eyes, feeling at that moment as if she could have followed him round the world. A lump rose to her throat and checked any answer. During the last few days a very little had sufficed to rouse her deepest emotions. They seemed to lie much nearer the surface than of old. She often felt inclined to cry, without knowing exactly why. Her heart swelled at a mere trifle. Love had quickened her whole nature, making it responsive, like a delicate instrument, to the slightest touch, but although she was aware of the effect produced, she was, as yet, only vaguely conscious of the cause.

"Come," he exclaimed cheerfully. "That's right. We are friends again, aren't we, just the same as if I had not transgressed?"

"Yes," she answered in a subdued voice. "We have never

quarrelled really. You did nothing except speak the truth. I *have* made a mess of my life, and I know it."

"Ah!" he said eagerly. "I wish you would tell me how it all happened. I have wondered so often what brought you two together, and how you ever gave your consent. It's the only thing about you that puzzles me, and makes me think there must be a curious contradiction in your character somewhere."

"What would you say if I told you I married for money?"

"I should not believe it."

"Nevertheless, it is the case. I——"

"Hulloa! What's up now?" called out Ebenezer, aroused from his slumbers by the stoppage of the boat.

"I'll tell you some other time," she whispered hastily. "I can't now."

"Aye, do." Then, aloud to Mr. Thompson, and making an extraordinarily hurried cast, "What's up? Nothing. I'm beginning to fish, that's all."

"Oh!" returned Ebenezer, with a yawn. "I believe I've had forty winks. Damnation! My right leg has gone to sleep, and I've no feeling in it whatever. Annie," addressing his wife, "I wish you'd just step over here and rub it well for me. There's a good girl. It exhausts my vital force to do it myself."

She rose obediently, and was about to comply with the request when Jens put up a warning hand.

"Best sit still," he said gravely. "Norwegian boats—dey not made to hold so many people. Dey upset if too much movement."

This suggestion terrified Ebenezer beyond measure, even although they were now in shallow water, not more than from three to four feet deep.

"For goodness' sake, Annie, stop where you are," he cried hastily. "I don't think I shall want you after all. My leg is better—a good deal better, and if the worst comes to the worst, I'll rub it myself."

"At the expense of your vital force?" asked Harry, jestingly.

She smiled, and, nothing loath, reseated herself. It was a delight to her to watch his movements, and the play of his features; besides she took an interest in the fishing and wanted to see if he got a rise.

Those tiresome little trout! Why wouldn't they come when he was so anxious to catch them. Surely one or two might sacrifice themselves, just for the sake of being obliging and giving innocent pleasure.

## CHAPTER XX.

## THE ROBBER'S LEAP.

IN spite of Annie's wish, the boat drifted slowly all along the bay, and not the sign of a fish did they see. True the sun was beating down fiercely upon the water, which shot forth a reflection so burning that it was almost painful, and you could well-nigh count every stone and green weed at the bottom; nevertheless, Annie, who was not very learned in matters piscatorial, failed to understand why the trout did not display a little more curiosity. She ended by believing that they were not there to take, and existed only in Jens' imagination, if he possessed such a thing.

Meantime a soft white cloud stole gently over the sun. The relief was instantaneous, but the cloud was airy and light, and its good effects could not possibly last for more than a few minutes. The water changed colour and assumed a darker hue. With half a dozen vigorous strokes Jens rowed the boat to the mouth of the river, where it came gurgling merrily into the lake, in a series of widening ripples.

"Now try 'ere," he said. "Ought to get one 'ere."

Harry, without losing any time, made three or four casts, and his fly, thanks chiefly to the action of the current, for wind there was none, worked tolerably well.

Suddenly a small, bright body flashed for an instant before his eyes, then disappeared.

"Have you got him?" asked Annie with breathless excitement.

"No," he responded, in tones of deep disappointment. "He rose, but was not hooked, more's the pity, especially as we are fishing for food quite as much as for amusement."

"Forsöge igjen!" said Jens, pulling the boat back a stroke or two.

At the very first cast up came the fish again, and this time he meant having it, for he took the fly greedily. Directly he felt the line tauten, he dived down beneath the water, and Harry thought at first that he had got a couple of pounder. But Desire is an extraordinary magnifier of size, none greater; and a few seconds showed that the fish had no strength in him to make any resistance. When captured, he weighed exactly



a quarter of a pound, but Harry was none the less delighted, hoping that this was the beginning of good sport. But, was there ever anything so annoying?—out shot the sun again, brighter and fiercer than ever, and after ten minutes more, spent in fruitless casting, Jens suggested that, the hour and the weather being both extremely unfavourable for fishing, they should land and have luncheon.

It was now close upon two o'clock, so they readily agreed to the proposal.

They found a delightful bank under the shade of a leafy alder, where the ye low dandelions, and ragged robins, and delicate white stonewort grew all around, and a sweet-voiced thrush warbled a joyous welcome overhead, and the whole air was scented with the fragrance of early summer. They sat them down, and looked out on the shining vista of the lake, on the great hills—purple in shadow, a dazzling whitey-grey where the sun caught their steep sides—and on the illimitable blue arch that spanned with fathomless ether their cold white crests. And the little brook, and the melodious thrush, and the humming insects, and the far-off sheep-bells murmured in their ears. “This—*this* is true enjoyment. Seek it not in crowded cities, in busy thoroughfares, in hot rooms, where the conflicting interests and varied emotions of men create perpetual strife; but seek it in solitary places, as yet not desecrated by too advanced a civilization, where lives are simple, human beings honest, and Nature, not Art reigns supreme. Then into your heart may steal a calm, a content, and peace, which that vortex of passion, ambition, strife, emulation and disappointment, called The World, so effectually banishes, and renders all but impossible. Nature, and Nature alone, can solace bitter woe and mortal despair.” Only bread and butter, jam and tinned stuffs!—that was all they got to eat; and yet, with the sun’s warm rays glinting brightly down through the green leaves of the alder, with the bee-worshipped flowers all around, emitting a faint, sweet odour, and with the glorious and elevating scenery to charm the eye on every side, and as it charmed to soothe the senses—they managed to forget for once, that they were doing with half a meal instead of a whole one. What proof can be more convincing of the beauty of their surroundings?

The thrush sang on, all undisturbed, the brook flowed downwards to the sea, and the great, pure heart of Nature awoke a corresponding chord in the finite ones of Harry Hopperton and Annie Thompson. Her influence prepon-

derated over every other sentiment, and even Love stood still, awed and abashed by a force superior to its own.

They were in no hurry to leave this enchanting spot. They sat there an hour or more, gradually becoming accustomed to the fascinating stillness, and taking an interest in every little incident that served to break it, as do people whose attention is not constantly being distracted in a thousand different channels.

First came a fair-haired, fresh-faced woman, who stepped down to the lake, and quite unconcerned by the presence of strangers, though she shot occasional glances in their direction, washed out the family linen for the week, wringing each article one by one, and profiting by the fineness of the day to spread them to dry on the green grass. The next visitor was a little, saucy bird, who, settling on the sandy shore, pecked his way down to the water, and stepped daintily in, until his tiny feet were covered. There he stood, splashing his wings and chirping merrily, as if he thoroughly enjoyed the bath, whilst two blue butterflies disported themselves over his head. Quite five minutes he stayed, and might have stayed longer had it not been for the appearance of a small red and white cow, with mild eye and full udder. She too entered the lake, and plunging hock deep into its cool, refreshing waters, drank long and greedily, switching her thin tail from time to time, and stamping with her fore feet whenever the flies proved unusually troublesome.

And then came two little flaxen-headed, brown-limbed children clad in picturesque tatters, who squatted themselves down on the golden sand and played at making castles, laughing and rolling about with the happiness of perfect freedom from mothers, nurses or any restraining influence. Although they were dressed in rags, and their tender feet were destitute of shoes and stockings, they seemed to know they were well off, and had a sturdy, independent look very different from the poor little creatures who make dirt pies in the gutters and hardly know the meaning of fresh air.

Harry and Annie felt as if they could have sat there forever, drinking in the peace and purity of the scene, but Ebenezer was less sensitive to the beauties of nature. He had been fidgeting for some time past, and now uttered a sharp scream of horror, as he discovered a big, fat-bodied spider leisurely crawling up his coat sleeve. A shiver ran through his frame.

"Come, come," he said irritably. "Let's be going. This is getting most confoundedly slow, or do you good people want to sit here for ever?"

His words woke his companions as if from a reverie. They had not spoken much, but it had been a very sweet experience, looking out at the beautiful world and feeling magnetically conscious of each other's presence. Language was not wanted on such an occasion. It seemed too trite, to express sensations that were above so every-day a medium. The pity was that these sensations could not last, that the highest and best thoughts of which their natures were capable might not always be maintained, but must inevitably give way to ones less exalted. Ebenezer's voice sounded like a harsh note out of harmony, but it recalled them to life, and made them conscious of the unreality of their dreams.

Annie drew a deep, long breath, and reluctantly rose to her feet. The spell was broken. Paradise receded into the distance. It had seemed quite near, almost within reach, but now it faded far, far away.

"Take us where you like," she said, trying to shake off the subtle intoxication that had crept into her veins. "Where do you wish to go?" And she turned to her husband.

"Oh! anywhere, as long as we make a move from this confounded place. I'm half eaten up by midges. Is there nothing worth seeing, now that we *are* here?" he said, appealing to Jens.

Jens told him that, before leaving the head of the lake, they ought most certainly to pay a visit to a celebrated spot close by, known far and wide in the neighbourhood as "The Robber's Leap."

"No very long walk," he said. "All *Engelskmænd* who come to Sandéthäl go see de place."

So saying, he led the way up the river. There was no path of any sort, and they followed in Jens' footsteps as best they could. By-and-by they met with the *débris* of a gigantic moraine, and climbed with ever increasing difficulty over the loosely lying boulders that thickly strewed the ascent. At length, after toiling upwards for nearly a mile, their conductors brought them to a standstill. The river, far beneath them, rushed tempestuously down, confined in a narrow chasm not more than fifteen or sixteen feet wide, which by main force had cleft through the rugged walls of grey granite that rose perpendicularly on either side. So high were the walls and

deep the abyss over which they frowned, that a sensation of giddiness was produced on nearing the brink.

Here Jens halted.

"Dis," he said, gazing down into the sombre depths below, "is de Robber's Leap. De robber 'ee yump across de chasm."

It looked indeed a formidable place for any man to have attempted to clear, not so much on account of its width, as because of the dizzy altitude at which the banks towered above the river. The swift-flowing current being pressed in on either side, formed a seething whirlpool, amidst which peeped dangerous black boulders, that must have occasioned death, had the distance been miscalculated ever so little.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Harry, "a nasty place to jump, and no mistake. Jens, tell us the story, for I presume there is ore, since you have brought us all this way."

Thus appealed to, Jens began the following narrative, which he told with great solemnity as befitting the gravity of the subject.

"In de olden times dere was much robbers about. Above—one lit hole, you zee?" And he pointed to a cavern high up the nearest mountain, which they had not hitherto perceived. "Dey was living dere in de varm of de summer—at night, dey go take de oder people's tings, when dey sleep for much. Den de farmers, you zee—dey come many men togeders, and zay, 'vi vil kill dose people,' and so dey run away, and de farmers dey run too, so dey yust come to de Elv, what you call river in your country. Den de first man, he yump, and 'ee over yump-ed all right, but de oder man 'ee does not yump so well, so he fall to de bottom and must be killed. Den de oder man who yump ed much good, 'ee zee dat, den 'ee yump-ed back again and fall to de bottom. So was both robbers killed in de olden time."

"How very interesting," said Harry, smiling at Jens' English, "though rather difficult to make out who was killed and who was not. Is that all the story?"

"No," answered Jens, pointing to a ragged urchin who had followed the group at a respectful distance. "Dat boy's fader, he also yump-ed over. Den was dere much people at a wedding and so he yust ran and yump-ed."

"I suppose he was drunk," observed Mr. Thompson, un sympathetically.

"Are there any bears here, Jens?" asked Harry, by way of diversion. "It looks just the place for them."

"Dere was one bear last winter. 'Ee come down from de mountain and kill de farmers' sheeps and goats. Dey could zee 'is tracks on de snow. So de farmers dey have great meeting and dey determine to syoot dat bear. Dey go out twenty, tirty of dem with dere guns——"

"Yes," interposed Harry greatly interested. "And what happened?"

"De farmers dey climb up de mountain, and de bear, 'ee walk right before dem. Den dey zay to one anoder, vi vill go down dat mountain again, and dey go; but when dey come to de bottom, dey stop and dey 'ave noder big counsel, and dey say, 'It very good ting to be prudent, what you call wise, but if vi zee dat bear again, vi vill certainly syoot him.'"

"And did they, Jens?"

"No, dat bear, 'ee very cunning. 'Ee never show 'imzelt any more. Tink de farmers frightened 'im away wid dere guns."

"They seem to have been an uncommonly courageous lot," said Harry, laughingly, "and they managed to unite valour with discretion in quite a remarkable degree."

Jens having now apparently exhausted his stock of anecdote, they wended their way back to the boat. By this time it was past four o'clock, and the day was gradually changing its aspect. It had clouded over, and grown dull and sultry, but still the brown trout continued in a sulky humour. After fishing for an hour, Harry only caught two little miseries, so small that it seemed a positive sin to deprive them of life, and he therefore threw them back into the lake again. From a sporting point of view, the expedition had proved a complete failure, but in every other way it had been most enjoyable. Even Mr. Thompson admitted that the scenery was worth while "doing" just for once, which, coming from him, was an immense token of appreciation.

They reached the end of the lake, to find Thekla and the foal still browsing diligently, not far from the spot where they had left them, and then for the first time arose the question who was to drive the stolkjærre home? Up till this moment Harry had never given the matter a thought.

"I will," said Annie, eagerly. "Oh! do let me. I know I can quite well."

"You? Tush," responded her amiable better-half. "You know no more about driving than the man in the moon. You would upset me to a certainty."



"Indeed I should not. I used often to drive in my younger days, and Thekla is so quiet, we could not possibly come to any harm."

As the choice lay between acceding to his wife's wish or trudging home on foot, Mr. Thompson, after some further remonstrance, agreed to trust his precious person to her skill, although he took care to impress upon Harry that he placed no faith in it whatever.

And a nice time Annie had on the homeward way. Every jerk, every jolt, every bump was attributed to her fault, until all the pleasure she had derived from the day's excursion was effectually destroyed by the snarling and cantankerous little man at her side. How was it possible to cherish high thoughts in his presence, when he was so entirely absorbed by his own material comforts and so completely taken up with his own particular existence as to be quite incapable of considering any other? Such a companion brought to the surface all the scum of one's nature.

"Dear me! how confoundedly clumsy you are, to be sure! I do believe you do it on purpose, just to annoy me. You could have kept clear of that stone perfectly well, had you only tried. Gracious Heaven! Where are you going to next? Dash it all, Annie, why the devil can't you keep your eyes open?"

This was the pleasing chorus chanted into her ear from the lake to Herr Christian's house. Sometimes it sank into a pianissimo, then it rose to forte, fortissimo, but whether soft or whether loud, the disturbing accompaniment to her thoughts never ceased until they pulled up before the porch. And just to show how quickly ideas change, Sandéthal, which only a short while ago they had considered the height of seclusion and isolation, now, with its little clustering houses, its well-kept road, landing-stage and store, appeared a very centre of civilization.

Coming from the far-off lake, and the huge, frowning precipices that encircled it, it seemed like descending into a different world full of life and activity.

The cows were slowly wending their way homewards in answer to the sweet-toned voices of the girls, and of the wooden horns whose penetrating notes were heard from afar sounding in many echoes from hill to hill. The tinkling sheep-bells smote the ear with a pleasant, homely sense of companionship, and the feeling of oppression created by a visit to

that barren district in which the Robber's Leap was situated, passed away from the spirit like a spell wrought by some brilliant, baneful beauty, but which vanishes in the presence of a milder enchantress.

Ebenezer that night at supper was chatty, nay almost loquacious.

He had his Annie all to himself, to treat as he liked, to order about as he liked, in the absence of Mr. Hopperton, whose presence invariably induced a certain restraint, which he had long since found exceedingly irksome.

On the present occasion, his good humour took the shape of eating a most enormous meal, quite regardless either of his liver or his digestion. After being unusually affectionate to Annie, who in receiving his caresses endured a silent martyrdom, he made himself comfortable on the sofa, and went fast asleep, leaving her to sit bolt upright on one of the stiff, horse-hair chairs.

She watched dutifully by her lord until ten o'clock; then, as Harry had not returned, she woke him up and carried him off to bed. When he was safely between the sheets and once more slept the sleep of the just, she stole softly back into the sitting room, cleared away the remains of their evening meal and re-arranged the table for Harry.

Margrete had already retired to rest. The establishment kept early hours, but she took a strange pleasure in providing for the comfort of the man she loved.

He would be very hungry after his long fast, and she grieved at not being able to give him more to eat. But the kitchen fire had gone out hours ago, and she dared not move about or make too much noise for fear of waking Ebenezer.

Fortunately, she had a little spirit lamp and a bottle of methylated spirit; and with these she could boil him the nice fresh eggs left her by Margrete in a legacy.

If it had been in her power, she would have given him the finest supper capable of being provided by human hands, but she wanted the necessary condiments and apparatus. Nothing was too good for him.

So she said to herself, poor, erring, deluded little woman, with beating heart she awaited the arrival of the youth whose imagination had elevated into a demi-god.

Lucky is it for men, the female ideal of Love is so exalted and so different from the material reality, that it possesses the

peculiar gift of investing quite a common piece of clay with every heroic attribute.

For if women saw men as they are, and not with charmed eyes and rose-tinted spectacles, how much marrying and giving in marriage would there be?

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## CHAPTER XXI.

### THINGS GROW SERIOUS.

PRESENTLY Annie heard Harry's voice outside, giving some parting instructions to Jens for the morrow. Then, when a few minutes had elapsed, he came softly in at the door, stepping gingerly on the points of his toes, so that his thick shooting-boots should make as little noise as possible on the bare boards. He did not see her when he first entered. She had a dark dress on, having changed her pink cotton, and sat with her back to the light, between the two windows; and she smiled to herself as she watched how daintily he moved.

Her woman's instinct told her that it was on her account he took these precautions, and this sign of his consideration—slight as it was—touched her to the quick. Small things do so when the heart is in a sensitive and easily affected condition.

"Har—Mr. Hopperton," she said, in a low tone, "you are back at last. How late you are!"

"What, Annie!" he ejaculated. "Not gone to bed yet? How's that?"

"Oh! I don't know. Somehow or other, I did not feel particularly sleepy."

"You ought to, after your long day in the open air."

"Perhaps," she returned, with a charming smile. "I was foolish enough to think I should like to give you your supper. It is lonely work coming back all by oneself in the dark to a silent house, with the inmates abed."

"Upon my word," he exclaimed, seating himself by her side, and giving her an affectionate look, which she considered an ample reward for her devotion, "that was good of you. I'm most awfully hungry."

"I felt sure you would be, and made what little provision was in my power." And as she spoke she popped the eggs

into the tin of boiling water, which latter was bubbling away quite merrily over the spirit lamp. "Have you had any sport?" she inquired, after a slight pause, during which he glanced at her with a mixed feeling of gratitude and admiration.

"I'm sorry to say none whatever. I begin to despair."

"O! you must not do that. It is early days yet. The salmon are sure to come sooner or later."

"It is to be hoped so, though they do not show any frantic greed at present."

"Did you not even have a rise?"

"Yes: Jens declared I rose a fish in the 'Nedfos' pool, but I can't say I saw him myself."

"Well, that was better than nothing at any rate," said Annie cheerfully, trying to dissipate his despondency. "It shows you were casting all right."

"I'm not so sure, for although we waited the orthodox five minutes, tried him with the same, then a smaller, and finally a completely different fly, the brute, in spite of all our persuasions, would not come again. I had to give him up at last in disgust."

"How very annoying," she exclaimed sympathetically.

"Wasn't it? I had no idea salmon were such hard things to catch. I always thought if you rented a decent river—which I suppose this is—that you were pretty certain of getting two or three every day. But from my personal experience, fishing certainly seems to be the most disappointing work under the sun. And as for the weather—it strikes me you never get it right. Either there is too much wind or too little, more rain than you want, or none at all, and the day when the conditions are favourable comes so seldom that you get tired of waiting for it."

Annie laughed. She could not help it. The expression of his face was so utterly woebegone.

"But the beauty of it is," she said jestingly, "the fisherman seldom loses hope. He comes back at night in the depths of despair, as you are now; nevertheless, by morning he is as ready to be off again as ever. Angling always reminds me of those lines of Pope—'Man never is, but always to be blest.'"

"Well!" said Harry, beginning to feel somewhat consoled, and applying himself to his supper with an appetite promoted by so many hours of fresh air and healthy exercise. "If the

'stor Lax' will only condescend to come some day, I suppose I must have patience and wait. But the fact is, the whole thing is much more difficult than I imagined."

"All the better. Man was made to triumph over difficulties. Come, confess, you care nothing for too easy a victory. You will think twice as much of your 'stor Lax' when you do get him, from having to work hard for him. It's the way of the world."

"Perhaps so, but I don't mind admitting to you, Annie, that I would give a hundred pounds to land a twenty or thirty pounder."

"You must have considerably more money than you know what to do with. But now, don't talk any more. Eat your eggs while they are hot."

Nothing loth, he obeyed her bidding, whilst she sat by and watched him, and kept him plentifully supplied with finely-cut slices of bread and butter. It was a positive delight to her to render any small service, for he had aroused all that natural instinct which makes a woman take pleasure in ministering to the smallest wants of the man to whom her heart has gone forth.

But as his hunger gradually became appeased, and she could feel him looking at her with kindly eyes, by the light of their solitary candle, stuck in an old black beer-bottle, she grew shyer and shyer, whilst against her will the warm colour mounted to her cheeks, and made them burn.

She was wildly, madly happy; for sitting in this little, bare room, in the semi-obscurity, with the long twilight lingering out of doors, and the restless magpies, even at so late an hour, still keeping up their chattering, he seemed to belong to her more than he had ever done before. And that sense of absolute possession of the loved one is inexpressibly precious to every true woman. She likes to feel that he is all her own, removed from any temptation except such as she affords, and free from the dreaded rivalry of other women. She is jealous in her affections, but how can she help being so, when they are a matter of such paramount importance to her? If she loves well, her heart is always being stabbed—after matrimony as much, perhaps more than before. It is inevitable; nevertheless, a few rare moments of perfect bliss are vouchsafed to her, when danger is excluded, and she becomes the sole companion of him whom her tender nature worships with true feminine adoration.



Such a moment had now come to Annie. Alas! That her happiness was not pure and innocent—that like so many of the good things of this world, it came too late, and guilt lent a sting, which although it added to the intensity of her emotions, yet gave them something of a painful and unholy character.

Harry was the first to break the silence.

"Annie," he said, after a bit, when he had pretty well made a clearance of everything on the table, leaning back on the sofa as he spoke, and stretching out his legs in an attitude of thorough bodily ease, "this is very jolly. Don't you think so?"

"Yes," she said, under her breath, casting down her eyes in confusion; "I do."

The tide of love had set in strong and powerful, and was drifting her down to the wide, destroying ocean of self-abandonment; but although she half-realized the depths to which it was whirling her, her power of resistance seemed deadened by some greater and more irresistible force, that rendered her in very truth but a puppet, a plaything, a creature driven here and there by circumstance. It was no use struggling. She was too weak. A fly might as well strive to break loose from a spider's web as she from the spell that bound her and completely revolutionized her nature. Certain instincts, certain warm impulses and emotions had been implanted within her. How could she help them? Was she responsible for their vehemence when once they became quickened into life—were her parents, from whom she doubtless inherited hereditary traits, or was the great Creator of all things? How could Annie at twenty answer questions which grey old heads full of learning and wisdom have failed to solve in any satisfactory manner? There she was, a girl—a woman—a human being neither wholly good, nor yet wholly bad, buffeted by contrary waves of passion, warring now with one temptation, now with another, complex, contradictory, but more or less helpless in the sea of Fate.

Poor sentient atoms, so keen to feel and to suffer. Are they not to be pitied, even when they err most, and commit the gravest follies? It is so hard for them to be strong. Even if they resist for a time, weak moments come that take them unawares, and they succumb.

"Where is your husband?" asked Harry abruptly. "Has he gone moth-catching?"

Her heart stood still. A horrible revolution took place within her, which for a few seconds seemed to dam the downward flow of feeling. Her husband? Ah! yes, her husband. It was well he reminded her of him. Only that he should be the person to do so gave her a shock.

"Hush!" she said, putting her finger to her lips. "He is in bed, and will hear you."

"And you stopped up on purpose for me. Oh! Annie, you dear, good little woman."

His praise grated frightfully. In her secret consciousness she knew how totally it was undeserved.

"No, no," she cried impulsively, and with a sudden flush of shame. "Don't say that. I'm not good. I'm very bad, disgracefully bad."

"Upon my word, I really can't see it, and if anyone else were to say such a thing I should feel inclined to punch that person's head. Bad, indeed! What next, I wonder?" And he drew a little nearer to her side.

"Oh! Mr. Hopperton——"

"Mr. Hopperton!" he interposed playfully. "I thought we had agreed you were to call me Harry."

"It does not matter what I call you," she said with bitter self-accusation. "You *must* know that I am not behaving well. If," with a hot blush, "if I were your wife, what would you say to my sitting up, because I wanted to be in the company of some other man?"

"I should say the other man was a lucky dog."

"No, you wouldn't. Why won't you answer seriously? It is no subject for mirth."

"At any rate, I should not be such a fool as to make a fuss."

"That's begging the question. If you were Ebenezer, would you like it?"

"But I'm not Ebenezer; and Ebenezer, as far as I can see, brings everything upon himself."

"Well, and what then? Does that justify me? Do two blacks make a white?"

As she spoke, she rose from her seat and looked at him fixedly.

He hesitated. When pressed thus, he did not like to tell a downright story; yet, at the same time, it was a little awkward giving a reply in exact accordance with his conscience. She read the doubt in his mind by intuition, and repeated more urgently even than before:

"Does it justify me, Mr. Hopperton?"

"Hum! well no; perhaps not, since you put it in that way. But why think about these things?"

Her countenance fell. A shadow passed over it. She held out her hand hurriedly, and in a smothered voice said, "Good-night. It's quite time I was in bed."

"Annie," he whispered, detaining it in a lingering pressure. "Have I offended you again? What a clumsy, brute of a fellow I am, to be sure. Always saying the wrong thing at the wrong time."

She shook her head sadly and slowly, and two great tears rolled down her cheeks.

"Offended me! What! because you have had the honesty to own what we both know to be the truth? No, thank goodness, I'm not quite so depraved as all that."

"I do wish you would not use such a word in connection with yourself. I can't tell you how it jars."

"I must use it, because it is the only one that applies," she responded stubbornly.

"Nonsense, Annie. I never met anybody so absurdly sensitive. What harm can there possibly be in you and I talking to each other in this sort of way? If you come to analyse our conversation, it is not so very wicked surely!"

"Perhaps not. But I doubt whether Mr. Thompson would approve of it."

"He does not approve of a good many things that yet are perfectly simple and inoffensive. We can hardly regulate our consciences by his. Indeed, I question if we did whether they would be much improved."

She looked at him in a vague, dazed sort of way. He would not help her, even one little bit, that was clear. It would have been more generous had he done so, and yet she felt glad. Wrong as he was—as they both were—she liked him all the better for sticking to his colours. But she must not show her joy—that intoxicating sentiment that thrilled her veins at finding him no whit better than herself.

"Mr. Hopperton," she said, with a smile: "Like all men, you are a special pleader, and argue very dexterously in your own favour."

"And you, Mrs. Thompson, are hyper-prudish, if I may coin the word, and, like all your sex, imagine you see some tremendous wrong where none exists. I really believe you

ladies enjoy making yourselves uncomfortable about nothing. It gives you something to think of."

It was not a very polite speech, but he was a little hurt by her remark, and by the whole tenour of the conversation.

She bridled up at once. With the tortuous sensitiveness of love, she construed his words to mean that whilst she looked upon their flirtation in a tragic light, and as an affair likely to lead to the most serious consequences, he regarded it from an altogether different, and a far less inconvenient and disturbing point of view. It was to her an intense reality, a new departure, a breaking-up of the hitherto comparatively smooth waters of her life; to him, nothing but an amusement indulged in, like any other, just to pass away the time. A pastime easily forgotten when some fresh one presented itself.

"Thank you," she said sarcastically. "No doubt your ideas of virtue are both more exalted and more refined than mine. Will you teach them to me?"

He reddened.

"Annie, don't be a fool."

"I'm not a fool—at least not in that sense of the word. And, please, will you be kind enough in future to desist from making quite so free a use of my Christian name?"

"Why, what's all this about?" he exclaimed, fairly puzzled to conceive how he had managed to annoy her, for naturally he never dreamt of her putting such a construction on his observation.

"It's about nothing at all," she said shortly.

"You are angry with me."

"Oh! dear no," tossing her head. "Why should I be? Your words can hardly move me to so extreme a sentiment. To be angry with a person implies caring for what he says, and I don't care."

"I am not ass enough to flatter myself that you do," he retorted hotly.

"That's right. I'm glad to hear it. It's as well to avoid misconception, especially on so delicate a point. And now, by your leave, good night, Mr. Hopperton, for the second time."

"Good night, Mrs. Thompson," he said stiffly. "Happy dreams to you, and, let us hope, restored equanimity of temper by to-morrow morning."

"Thanks. I echo your kind wish."

They stood for a minute looking at each other, with anger

flashing from their eyes and yearning at their hearts. Perhaps it was the yearning that produced the anger—at all events on her side. It often does with women, who wound themselves in the desperate struggle to hide what they feel. But something in her face, some tell-tale expression that contradicted the sarcasm of her speech, made him relent the sharpness of his own language.

"Good night, Annie," he said again, in an altered voice. "I *will* call you Annie, whether you give me leave to do so or not; and, look here, I won't fall out with you, however hard you may try to get up a quarrel. I was wrong to answer back just now."

"Mr. Hopperton," she answered, sweeping him a mocking curtsey, to hide the emotion that was overpowering her, "you are a model of courtesy and forbearance."

"Never mind what I am at present. You are unhappy, and it grieves me to the heart to see you so, and yet not be able to remedy the evil. Believe me," and he looked at her significantly, "I would if I could. But since I can't," he went on in his softest and most persuasive tones, "I want you to promise me, dear, always to look upon me as your friend and let me assist you in every way that I can without bringing you into trouble."

A lump rose up in her throat. How could she help loving him when he was so good? He ought to understand that talking to her like this only made matters a thousand times worse. A single kind word from him, left her utterly defenceless. It pierced her feeble armaments through and through.

"Don't, don't," she murmured, in a choking voice. "I—I—can't bear it."

He made a forward stride and looked right down into the depths of her glistening eyes. She tried to withdraw them from his gaze, but he mastered her whole being, and she could not. A thrill shot through her frame, and slowly—slowly a great hot blush crept over throat, cheeks, and brow. He stooped his fair head to hers—he too was agitated—and whispered something in her ear. She trembled from head to foot.

"Is it so, Annie? Is it this—*this* that is the matter? Don't be afraid to tell me."

Tell him in actual words what her heart cried so passionately, "Harry, oh! Harry, I love you." Impossible! Every feeling of womanly modesty repudiated the idea.



She gave a little, quick sob, tore her hand from his grasp, and not trusting herself to speak, for fear of breaking down entirely and losing her last lingering remnants of self-respect, fled to the sanctuary of her own room. Here at last she was safe—she, a married woman whose every fibre quivered with a great and guilty love which she could not contend against, but of which she was deadly ashamed.

Pain? Ah! yes, there was more of pain than of pleasure in the struggles she still made for preservation. When she had gone, Harry, as if the atmosphere of the room stifled him, stepped out on to the porch, where he proceeded to light up a cigar before turning in.

It was a very still night, and scarce a breath of air stirred the delicate leaves of the ash overhead. They formed a broken canopy through which the darkling sky peeped faintly in serene repose, disturbed only by an occasional shining star. The moon played upon the river with her gentle beams, and made the more distant Fjord appear like a silver mirror, set in a frame of amethyst. And as he looked, two great grey herons rose up from the marshy delta and, with slow flight and drooping legs, winged their way across the valley. The tranquil influences of the night gradually asserted themselves over the tumultuous ones to which he had recently been subjected, and insensibly his spirit grew calmer, though a tinge of sadness, rendered soft and dreamy by the hushed world around him, still lingered behind.

"Poor little thing," he mused, whilst an unconscious smile, not wholly free from vanity, stole over his face. "I'm afraid she's awfully fond of me, and I'm awfully fond of her too, more's the pity. If she were single, I'd marry her to-morrow, but then, unfortunately, she isn't. There's the rub. One can't get over that fact. And now that things are more or less reaching a climax, it won't do for me to give her too much encouragement. She's tremendously warm-hearted and impulsive, and we both get led away, for I'm such a confounded fool, that when I'm with a nice, pretty, little woman, who speaks to me softly, and looks at me kindly, I can't help forgetting she's married, and saying more than is wise."

Here he puffed at his cigar for a bit, and relapsed into meditation. Then, all at once, he drew himself up with an air of decision, and said aloud, "But it won't do—it won't do. We must pull up before it is too late. Even as it was, if that cross-grained little husband of hers had happened to turn up

to-night whilst we were sitting amiably conversing on the sofa, things might have been awkward. She would have been placed in a false position, and though I don't mind for myself, I do for her. She has enough to bear as it is, without my adding to her troubles."

Again he relapsed into silence, and again his reflections broke forth into muttered speech.

"If only she were a girl! I wish to goodness she were; but morality's morality, although I don't set up for being any better than my neighbours. On the other hand, there would have to be a divorce, a big scandal, and no end of dirt to wade through, before anything could come of it, and who knows but what by that time we should both be tired of each other? No, no, it's best to keep one's conscience clear. She's a regular little brick. I'd go through fire and water to serve her, but all the same we had better keep out of each other's way in future. It's the only thing to do."

With this, he re-entered the house, and went to bed, where he straightway fell fast asleep. Of the depths of his affections the reader can judge. No doubt it was very gratifying to his masculine vanity to discover that Annie Thompson was even more madly in love with him than he was with her, but he was not so infatuated as to be unable to see the drawbacks to the situation. And when men calculate, they are seldom stricken by an incurable passion.

Annie, on the contrary, instead of reasoning matters out in a calm, dispassionate spirit, flung herself down on her bed, and sobbed as if her very heart would break.

"Oh! oh!" she wailed. "How I love him, how I love him! A week ago I could not have believed it possible that I was capable of caring for any man in this frantic fashion. I am mad, bewitched, no longer in the possession of my senses; for if he had taken me in his arms and kissed me to-night when he said 'I want you to promise me, dear, always to look upon me as your friend,' I could not have resisted. How kind he looked, how good and noble! And I thought he was going to do it—I feel sure he would have done it had I remained in the room. Alas! alas! what shame. He has guessed my secret. When he whispered in my ear, 'Annie, you are not unhappy, are you, because you care for me, and I for you?' I dared not make any reply. I could only look at him, and my looks betrayed me. Oh! my God, my God!" hiding her face in her hands, whilst a convulsive shudder ran through her

frame, "what am I coming to? Save me, shield me from my self, and do not tempt me beyond my power."

"Annie, is that you? What are you making all that noise about?" called out a querulous voice from the next room.

It was her husband, awake and listening to her movements. She trembled guiltily, but pretended not to hear. Indeed, she hardly knew what reply to make.

"Aren't you in bed?" he inquired in an injured tone.

There was a considerable pause; then she said, "Yes." She had hurried off her clothes with feverish speed, undoing strings and buttons with quick though trembling fingers.

"Then, for goodness sake, keep quiet, and don't make such an infernal row. I don't want to be woke up again."

She breathed a sigh of relief. He had not overheard her sobs, her irrepressible outburst of despairing love. Thank God for that!

In ten minutes Ebenezer was once more asleep, as she could tell by his regular breathing, distinctly audible through the thin partition that separated their two rooms; but there was no sleep that night for her; only passionate agitation and remorse.

And what was it all for?

All for a good-looking, pleasant, young man, who would fall in love with the next woman he came across. She knew enough of his facile, easy-going temperament to be aware that although he was fond enough of her now, and, had no obstacle existed, would doubtless have made a most excellent husband when continually under the same influence, he would very soon forget her once she was out of sight. Nevertheless, it was this same tranquil disposition of his, so unlike her own, which had such a powerful attraction for her. She, whose emotions were so strong, found it soothing and restful to be in the presence of one who took things in the order in which they came, who was more exercised if he did not catch a salmon than if a woman was breaking her heart for him, and who had the happy knack of regarding life from an optimistic point of view. His equability, cheerfulness, and good-nature tranquilized her stormier moods. Married to him, she might have been a different woman. She told herself that they could have lived very, very happily together as man and wife, had not an unkind Fate linked her lot with one who possessed the peculiar faculty of rousing the muddiest depths of her nature, and thus forcing her to live from day to day in a state of conscious repulsion and self-abasement.

Would she ever succeed in struggling out of the mire.

Yes, Annie. That is a problem which Time, resolute endeavour, and a stern adherence to duty will solve, although not perhaps in the manner pictured by the keen longings of your youth.

Age will bring calm, and death eternal peace, whether it be through the gift of an immortal crown, or by the inanition of the pain-racked body.

Only, through thick and thin, good and evil, joy and grief, stick at all hazards to the narrow path.

No matter the thorns. Even if they pierce your tender flesh, bear their pricks bravely, and like a true heroine.

Maybe it is hard. Everything in Life is hard, but it will be the better for you in the end. Yield not to desire, however sweet. Turn your back resolutely on unlawful love.

For what does the broader path mean, however alluring it may appear at the outset?

Nothing but loss of self respect, destruction of all moral repose, and bitter disappointment.

Women are as sheep gathered in a fold. They dare not stray where their fancy listeth.

If they do—if they try to leap over the bounds that confine them, all their pretty white wool, which is their covering and their glory, gets smirched and stained. They gain nothing, but lose immeasurably, and wound themselves cruelly in the process. Hereafter they can only hide away, with a festering sore cankering at their hearts.

"*Cui bono?*" Is it worth while? Is it good enough to sacrifice so much and get so little in return?

Fair fame lasts a lifetime. Love? Who can tell? Men are inconstant, and the flame of passion soon dies out, and leaves but ashes behind, and *they* do not warm the hearth.

Consider these things therefore, and let Duty, Duty, Duty be every woman's motto, no matter how stern or how forbidding it may appear.

It alone will lead her through darkness to light. There is no other way.

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## CHAPTER XXII.

## AMATEUR COOKING.

A WEEK passed away. A week of uninterrupted fine weather and cloudless skies, during which Harry grew more and more disgusted with fishing, and was necessarily obliged to spend a good deal of his time indoors. As a consequence, the situation daily became increasingly strained. When people are thus thrown together, forced to sit in a single sitting-room, and to take all their meals there, they cannot avoid seeing a good deal of one another, whether they like it or not. In such narrow quarters it is inevitable.

Now, if harmony exists between the parties, the impossibility of reading, writing, or performing the commonest action in solitude does not so much matter. Folk give and take, and put up with their neighbours' little eccentricities; but those who have been placed in a position similar to that in which Harry Hopperton and Mr. and Mrs. Thompson now found themselves, can realise how intensely painful and disagreeable it becomes when there is downright dislike on one side, fierce jealousy on the other, and violent and consuming love on the third. With such elements at work, the difficulty of keeping the peace is super-human, and friction in some shape or other continually takes place, threatening at any moment to burst out into an active flame, which will render the "status quo" impossible to maintain.

So was it with our friends at Sandéthal. They had the restless and uncomfortable feeling of living on the brink of a volcano, which the least imprudent step on their part might excite into an active crater.

Harry had honestly striven to keep out of Annie's way, and she of his. He had desisted from paying her any marked attention in her husband's presence. He reserved his civilities for the rare occasions when they were alone; but neither of them could help stolen glances, soft smiles and tell-tale blushes. These things betrayed them unconsciously, and Mr. Thompson, whose senses seemed to have become preternaturally sharpened, grew increasingly irritable and morose as such signs of affection became daily more apparent. Words he could not take exception to, because the young people were so guarded in their language that he found a difficulty in rebuking them, but these



symptoms of a tender interest were quite as bad, if not worse. They aggravated him all the more from their silence and involuntariness, yet how was he to suppress them without proclaiming a state of things which even the guilty parties had the sense to try and conceal? In short, he was ripe for a quarrel, and felt all the angrier because both his wife and Harry had prudently avoided furnishing him with a cause. If he made a fuss, he would only be putting himself in the wrong, without being able to prove his suspicions. Yet he was convinced that they were all well founded, and that his wife, at least, was studiously deceiving him.

Once or twice, he all but made up his mind to leave Sandéthal. One thing alone prevented him from putting this purpose into execution. Before quitting England, he had made what circumstances had since proved to be an unfortunate promise to his friend, Mr. Smith, that they would meet in Norway exactly a fortnight from the date of his, Mr. Thompson's, departure. The fortnight would expire in two or three days, and he felt he could not very well run away from Sandéthal in this abrupt manner without first seeing or hearing from Smith.

Thus, his movements were hampered, though Annie, who was not aware of the above fact, lived in momentary terror that he would announce his intention of leaving. Meanwhile, Ebenezer was forced to give some outlet to his ill-humour. He would scarcely have been human had he not done so. He therefore vented it upon the food, a safe and fertile subject of discontent.

It must be confessed that eggs, milk, bread, and coffee, with slices of tough, and very much burnt-up, pieces of what by courtesy is called "Oxesteg," or beefsteak, are very excellent things in their way; nevertheless, when precisely the same fare is set before you day after day, without the smallest variety, even the healthiest palate is apt to weary a little. And Mr. Thompson's was not a healthy palate, it required humouring. Besides, there were a good many minor discomforts, nothing to a person determined to look upon things from a bright point of view, everything to him who habitually regarded the world from a dark one.

Sometimes the eggs were not fresh, and although Mr. Thompson treated them with scorn when other delicacies were at hand, their absence proved a terrible deprivation, since they formed the principal article of consumption. Then, too, the baker, who appeared a highly independent sort of man.

would only bake "Hvede-bröd," or white bread, once a week. The seven days' supply was delivered all together, and after the first three mornings, it was astonishing how stale the loaves became. By the end of the week the sharpest knife could hardly cut through them, much less Mr. Thompson's teeth, which were most of them false.

The butter was altogether indifferent, and proved a constant source of dissatisfaction. Every now and then it was simply not eatable, and as for the meat—Annie discovered that it was sent out from Bergen weekly, in an unappetizing-looking, moist, sinewy lump, which was hung up in an underground cellar, the general receptacle for old packing cases, empty beer-bottles, native cheeses, and the usual *débris* of a household, there to be buzzed round and settled on by a number of large and persistent blue-bottles, who enjoyed its stringy particles, if nobody else did.

For the first two days, raw slices were cut from this hunch, and fried in butter in the frying-pan till they were perfectly black. If the weather was hot and the slices were green to commence with, they were taken down to the brook, and left there for ten minutes or a quarter of an hour, whilst the cleansing water trickled over them, and removed the traces of the blue-bottles. On the third day, when the meat in an uncooked state would no longer keep, the piece that remained was put into a saucepan with a lump of fat and a quantity of butter. This was a high day and holiday; and when Margrete bore in the brown and greasy joint, it was always with an extra sonorous and triumphant "Vaer saa god" that she put it down on the table.

For the rest of the week, the remnants were again sliced and fried, until from being cooked so many times they resembled nothing so much as an old piece of shoe-leather. Any nourishment or succulence the meat might once have possessed, had long since disappeared. And so ended the beef; our friends singing a joyful chorus, at sight of its successor, whose departure was in its turn hailed with equal glee.

Now this sort of living was all very well for two or three days, when everything bore the charm of novelty, and expectation had not yet been reduced to a dead certainty, but when that stage was reached a re-action set in. No doubt, in many ways it is a fatal thing to know too much, and Annie, who being a sensible and inquiring little person had contrived to extract a good deal of information from Herr Christian, com-

municated the above details to her spouse, in an unguarded and confidential moment.

The communication was an unfortunate one, as far as Mr. Thompson was concerned, since it did but increase his suspicion of, and dislike to, the viands set before him. In consequence of her husband's continuous grumbling, which rendered every meal an ordeal, Annie formed a grand design in her little head—namely, she would cook a dinner all by herself, and try whether she could satisfy her lord and master better in the culinary line than did the excellent, but far from artistic, Margrete.

For some days previously she studiously read up a cookery book, and although she experienced considerable difficulty in not revealing her intentions to Harry, she managed to keep the secret.

Tuesday was the day appointed for the feast, since on that morning the steamer called at Sandéthal, bringing fresh supplies. To Annie's no small relief—for she was full of her project, and had got Herr Christian to explain it to Margrete, so that that damsel might not be unprepared for her presence—Harry, flattered by a dimness round the sun, went out fishing immediately after breakfast, and Ebenezer took himself off with his net. Never had she been so glad to get rid of them.

They had arranged to dine at three, and shortly before one o'clock Annie went into the kitchen.

It was the queerest little cupboard of a place possible; somewhere about nine feet square, and on looking at the tiny and primitive stove up in a corner, the only wonder was, not that the cooking was bad, but that it was done at all. Imagine an iron box of diminutive dimensions, raised about three feet from the ground, possessing two round holes on its flat top, a flue going up to the roof, to allow of the smoke escaping, and a little door in front, through which pieces of stick were periodically inserted.

Roasting, broiling, and baking were out of the question. All food must either be fried or boiled. As she gazed at it, Annie for the first time began to comprehend the difficulties with which Margrete had to contend, and why, when Ebenezer sounded the coffee-pot, or struck his glass for more knives, more forks, more spoons and plates, a mysterious interval invariably took place before the request was complied with.

For there, on a wooden board, lay the whole stock of china and cutlery belonging to the Sandéthal establishment, which

Margrete was busily engaged in cleaning. Annie made a rapid, mental inventory. It consisted of five knives, one with a loose handle, four forks, three table-spoons, three tea-spoons, half-a-dozen plates, of which two were cracked, one riveted, and two hopelessly chipped. She could not help feeling rather remorseful as she looked at this limited supply, and remembered how often the two gentlemen had called out for this, that, and the other, just as if they were at home, and how recklessly they used fresh knives and forks with each course, expecting clean ones to be provided. Poor Margrete, besides having to cook, dish up, and serve, had evidently the additional labour of washing the dirty things in between.

Meantime Annie, exalted by the mere thought of the wonders she meant to achieve, was a little damped, on looking into the interior of the stove, to find no fire burning. Nothing but a heap of white ashes greeted her eyes. However, by signs and the aid of "Bennett's Phrase Book," she contrived to make Margrete understand that she wished the fire lighted at once. Whereupon that substantial hand-maiden opened the back-door, stepped out, and taking up a hatchet, calmly proceeded to lop off a quantity of wood from a log lying outside. This she gathered up in her checked apron, and brought into the house.

She next put a wooden yoke over her shoulders, to which were attached a couple of zinc buckets, and went down to a little brook hard by, that flowed into the larger river.

Annie was considerably impressed by the amount of labour, which even these modest preparations entailed, and began to feel a great respect for Margrete, who in a rough and ready way did the entire work of the household, and was cook, parlour-maid, house-maid, water-carrier, wood-hewer and general servant all in her own person. She now struck a match, popped a bit of old newspaper inside the stove, laid two or three sticks on the top of it, puffed away at them vigorously, and in a minute or two the fire was burning quite merrily.

The steamer, besides bringing the accustomed beef, had also brought part of a neck of mutton, and of this Annie determined to make an Irish stew. With her own fair hands she chopped the cutlets asunder, after first washing the meat well in a little salt and water. Then, she put them into a saucepan with just enough water to cover them, and added salt and pepper to

taste, and some sliced onion. After it had simmered for about twenty minutes, she threw in the potatoes, Margrete looking on with wide, wondering eyes, at the sight of Kjöd (meat) being cooked without the indispensable adjuncts of butter and fat. This done, Annie took the small sea fish, which were already cleaned, and after first beating up the yolk of an egg, brushed each one over separately, then rolled it in bread crumbs. She had difficulty however in getting the latter fine enough, as there was no grater. Next, she cut off a little suet from the beef, and melted it down into dripping, in which she fried her fish, and to her intense delight, they came out looking lovely, quite a beautiful light brown that would have reflected credit on a *chef*.

To crown all, she brought forth some rice, which she had placed in milk the night before in order to soak well, and gave Margrete injunctions to keep on stirring it, whilst she dished up.

It is an undoubted fact, that if some are born to grandeur, others are born to littleness. By littleness is meant, a small house, few servants, and waiting upon themselves. Annie delighted in this simple, homely life; and in that small, smoky kitchen, with its entire freedom from all ceremony. Bending over her saucepans with flushed and anxious face, for she was not altogether certain how their contents would turn out, she was as happy as a queen. She realized unconsciously that the great want in most ladies' lives is *work*—some honest, healthy occupation to exercise the body and keep the mind at a gentle tension, just sufficient to prevent it from lying fallow, yet not so great as to rouse it into unwholesome activity. Action is at all times better than thought for a woman. The latter, from the mere circumstances of her position, and the lot assigned by Nature, seldom leads to really happy results, and is apt to make her grow morbid and discontented; whereas some good, bustling pursuit keeps her superfluous energies well and safely engaged.

Annie, as she turned her Irish stew, steaming hot into the dish warmed for its reception, felt that this was the proudest moment of her life and that she had missed her vocation in becoming the wife of a man possessing eight hundred a year, instead of the helpmate, not only in name but in deed, of some honest and intelligent artisan.

Her air of almost infantine delight and importance, as she placed the Irish stew on the table, right under Ebenezer's



nose, so that he might fully inhale the gratifying aroma which arose therefrom, was charming to behold.

"Hulloa!" he exclaimed, giving an approving sniff. "Why! What's this?"

"Taste it," said Annie, blushing red with pleasure. "Taste it, Mr. Hopperton," turning to Harry.

They both did as desired; for indeed the fumes were savoury. Nevertheless Ebenezer began by taking the first mouthful cautiously. Experience had taught him distrust. But he had no sooner clenched his teeth upon it than his whole face brightened, and broke up into smiles, all the more precious to Annie because of their rarity.

"Well!" she said eagerly. "What is it like?"

"First rate. I have not tasted such a dish since I left England. I wonder where on earth Margrete learnt to make so excellent a stew, and why she has never given it to us before."

At this, Annie could contain her pride no longer.

"Because she didn't make it, Ebenezer," and her face was a study. "I made it."

"You! Impossible. Why I did not know you could cook."

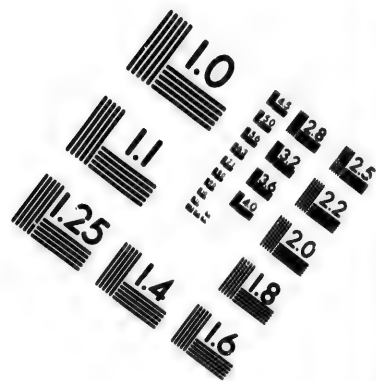
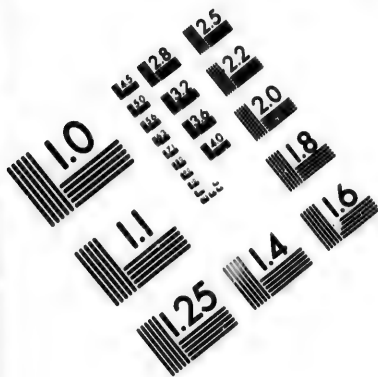
"Neither did I," she returned with a joyous laugh, "till I came to try. But one can do most things, if one only puts one's mind to them. Nine times out of ten it's the intelligence that's wanting."

"Well, old girl, I congratulate you highly, and don't mind how often you cook my dinner for me in future."

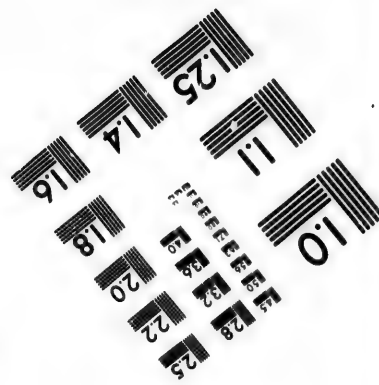
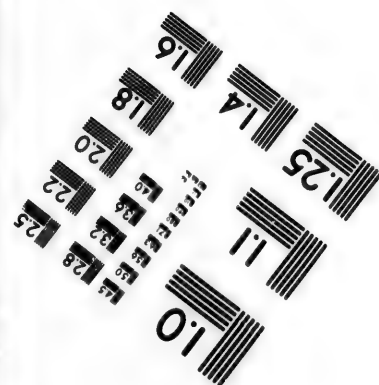
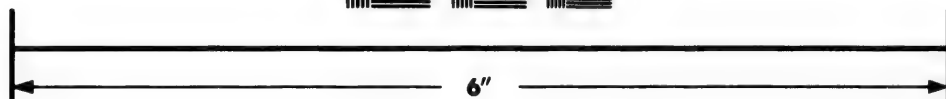
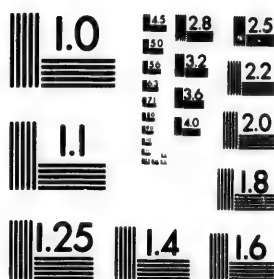
Altogether the repast was a complete triumph to Annie. She trotted in and out of the kitchen, told Margrete in her broken Norsk to be sure and taste the stew, and brought back the rice, of which both gentlemen highly approved. Harry opened a pot of apricot jam in its honour, and with a jug of new milk in addition, they did such justice to it, that, to use the children's expression, nothing was left for "Mr. Good Manners." Annie was in a state of perfect rhapsody. Her dark eyes sparkled, and on her soft, young cheeks lingered a bloom, imparted by the combined effects of the kitchen fire and excitement.

"Have you had a good dinner?" she asked softly of Harry, when Ebenezer, hearing that Herr Christian had received some letters for him by the steamboat, went out of the room to fetch them.





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"First-class. I never had a better in my life ; but I am afraid you must be most dreadfully tired after all your labours on our behalf."

"No, not very, only a little, and," shooting a shy glance at him, "if *you* are pleased I am more than repaid for any trouble I may have taken."

He looked back at her in return, and was about to say something. Then he checked himself suddenly and walked to the window. What a dear little woman she was to be sure, and what a pity it was that he could not marry her ! She would have taken him, he felt certain, and that belief always makes a man feel very kindly disposed towards a woman. It flatters his vanity, and exalts him in his own esteem. Harry was beginning to find it harder and harder to resist temptation.

To be in the same house with a pretty woman—a pretty woman, moreover, who is deeply attached to you, and for whom you entertain an exceedingly warm sentiment in return, and not transgress the bonds of conventional friendship, is trying a man very high indeed. So highly, that Harry doubted if he could stand it much longer.

He foresaw more and more clearly, that sooner or later virtue was bound to succumb. For there was inclination ever present, whispering in his ear, whenever he looked at Annie's fresh, attractive, young face, "Kiss it, kiss it ; she won't be very angry. She's much too fond of you to make a fuss."

Granted that inclination was naughty, but then on the other hand, virtue appeared unduly stern. Where was the harm ? Where was the harm ? So the tempter urged, and ever the answer grew feebler and feebler. He had been within an ace of catching her in his arms and straining her to his heart already. If once his self-control broke down, what would be the end of it all ?

He preferred not to reply to that question. He could not do so to his satisfaction, and yet the desire to feel the touch of Annie's lips grew daily stronger. Nothing but Ebenezer's presence restrained him. His sense of honour did not approve, but that fact is often insufficient to prevent people from doing wrong. If it were, the world would be a great deal better than it is.

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## CHAPTER XXIII.

## ANNIE GOES OUT FISHING AT NIGHT.

MR. THOMPSON came rushing back into the sitting-room in a great state of excitement, holding an open letter in his hand.

"Annie," he said abruptly to his wife, "can you pack up your things at once?"

"Pack up my things!" she echoed in amazement.

"Yes. It appears that the steamer has gone on to another small Fjord some way distant, but Herr Christian tells me she touches at Sandéthal again this evening, on her return journey. It is now quarter to four," looking at his watch. "Can you be ready to start at six?"

She turned deadly pale, and for a few seconds all the main-springs of her being seemed to come to a standstill. Her heart ceased beating, an icy chill clogged the free circulation of her blood. It had come then at last—the thing she so dreaded and feared. Henceforth, her path and Harry Hopterton's would lie far apart. She might never see him more. With difficulty she gulped down a rising sob.

"Why, what's the matter with you?" exclaimed Ebenezer, struck by her extreme pallor. "You are as white as a sheet, and look as if a feather would knock you down."

By a supreme effort she collected herself. She could feel that Harry's eyes were upon her, as well as her husband's.

"It's—it's nothing," she stammered. "I—I don't feel quite well, that's all."

"The heat has upset you, no doubt," said Mr. Thompson, more sympathetically than usual. "You will get a cool air on the Fjord, and very likely the sail will do you good."

She shook her head, and smiled a melancholy smile.

"Ebenezer," she gasped rather than said, "I—I can't come to-day, indeed I can't."

"Why not?" he asked sternly. "What nonsense is this?"

"My clothes have gone to the wash, and I could not possibly get them back in time."

"H'm! that's awkward; but surely you can take them as they are."

"If I could have them at once, yes, most certainly," she said, gathering courage, as her determination not to say goodbye to Harry in this sudden manner strengthened. "Unfor-

tunately, the washerwoman lives a long way up the valley, and there would not be time between now and six o'clock to send a man to fetch them back. The thing is impossible."

He frowned, and walked meditatively up and down the room for a few minutes, whilst Harry sat and watched him in silence, guessing pretty well the state of Annie's mind, and wondering what the issue would be of this marital divergence of opinion.

At length Ebenezer spoke.

"I must go, at any rate," he said, "even if you don't, or won't."

She breathed a sigh of relief. She felt like a prisoner doomed to die, who, although he knows his death is inevitable, yet hails with strange, unreasoning joy, a prolongation, however short, of life.

"It is not that I won't go, but that I can't, Ebenezer," she returned. "But why this sudden alteration of your plans? Has anything happened? Have you had bad news from England?"

"No, but I have just received a letter from my friend Smith, asking me to be sure and meet him to-morrow, at a place called Yokuldal. He says that he finds he is unable to come on here as we had arranged, owing to pressure of business, which will necessitate his taking a much shorter holiday than usual. Therefore, if I would see him at all, this is my only chance."

Now Mr. Smith was the one human being in the world, excepting himself and his wife, for whom Mr. Thompson possessed the smallest sentiment of affection. He was the only friend he had, and perhaps Ebenezer prized his friendship all the more on that account. Anyhow, Annie had not taken long to discover that "Smith" was likely to prove a *bête noire* as far as she was concerned, since he was mixed up with all their plans, formed a daily theme of conversation, and apparently was considered indispensable to their happiness, even during the honey-moon.

She had never met this Mr. Smith, but on the whole it was perhaps not unnatural that she should have taken a dislike to him, and viewed him with profound suspicion. For herself she neither could nor would leave Sandéthäl so hurriedly. On this point she was quite resolved. The last farewell to Harry Hopperton might be all left her to cherish in the future. In the long, long years to come, when existence had become

an automatic process, destitute of joy or hope, her memory must at least have *something* on which to feed. Without one bright recollection to keep her heart from growing wholly dead and callous, Life would be impossible. She simply could not face it.

With the quickness of resource for which her sex is remarkable, she now sought to obtain a reprieve, and, as the surest means of arriving at her object, cunningly endeavoured not to appear to oppose her husband's desires. Instinct told her that this was the only way of encompassing her end; for if she once allowed him to see how desperately anxious she was to remain at Sandéthal, if only for an extra couple of days, all chance of his letting her do so would be over to a certainty.

Alas! that even Love, the noblest of human passions, should teach dissimulation and induce naturally honest and straightforward natures to stoop to deceit. But thus it is always, when the affections stray in an unlawful channel, and they cannot find scope without descending to hypocrisy. They seek to free themselves from the conventionality of custom and the laws laid down by their fellow-men, but in reality there is no doing any such thing. Conscience inwardly and The World outwardly, its opinions and verdicts, are terrible foes with which to contend. They cut you down at every step.

Annie was beginning to experience this on a small scale. Already she blushed to think how greatly she had deteriorated morally, and how her mind was attuning itself to unrighteous thoughts and growing accustomed to them. Nevertheless, it takes a good deal to stop the stone that is once set a-rolling. Directly it became necessary for her to conceal what she felt—when she was bound to take to acting to hide passion and cover shame, then she was no longer innocent, or as she once had been.

She lost something, and knew that she had done so; but even this knowledge, painful and humiliating as it was, failed to check the infatuation by which her whole being was possessed.

Although she could not shut her eyes to the changes—changes, too, entirely for the worse—going on within her, she was equally powerless to hinder them. And to a sensitive high-toned nature, perhaps there is no more exquisite pain than that occasioned by a sense of spiritual retrogression, when

the lusts of the body conquer the mind and dominate the intellect. It requires very coarse clay to sin with impunity. Those made of finer material suffer agonies during the process of degradation.

Annie now turned to Ebenezer with a smile, whose insincerity he did not detect.

"Of course," she said in her sweetest and most submissive manner, "I would pack up my things and come with you this minute, were it possible. In fact, I think we have had about enough of Sandéthal, but you see for yourself that I am placed in a dilemma."

"I don't see it. *You say so,*" he growled.

"Now what I propose is this," she went on, paying no attention to the remark. "Catch the boat this evening, and go off to Yokuldal to meet Mr. Smith, and I will follow in the course of a day or two."

"You can't," he said, mollified by her apparent readiness to depart. "There's no boat for another week, and what would you do here by yourself all that time?" glancing with no very good will at Harry.

She understood the look perfectly, and it made her grow inwardly hot, but her interest was to keep him in a good temper. Only one short week ago she could resent his sneers and innuendoes with scorn, to-day she was no longer in a position to do so.

"I should not propose to stay here for any time," she returned calmly. "Perhaps you are not aware of the fact that there is a road to Yokuldal over the mountains, by which you can reach that place in about seven or eight hours. It would be a pity for you to miss Mr. Smith, especially when he evidently makes such a point of your meeting. Therefore, directly you arrive send me a telegram to say what your plans are and what day you wish me to join you."

She had cajoled him, as a woman nearly always does cajole a man when, by fair means or foul, she has set her mind on having her own way. The above programme seemed so feasible, and at the same time so simple, that Mr. Thompson, on the spur of the moment, could think of no suitable objection. He was dissatisfied, but allowed himself to be overruled. Smith was comparatively a rich man, and occupied a good position. Mr. Thompson entertained a great respect for him, and was proud of having secured his friendship. He had no wish to forfeit it; nevertheless it required a very

powerful motive to induce him to leave his bride in Mr. Hopperton's company. But the young people had behaved with remarkable discretion during the past week, and he imagined that their flirtation, thanks to the tact and promptitude he had displayed, was effectually nipped in the bud. Besides, he consoled himself by thinking that Annie would not be left alone with Mr. Hopperton for long. He would take precious good care, directly he reached Yokuldal, to send her a telegram bidding her set out at once, and then, thank goodness! he should see the last of the impudent enemy who was endeavouring to disturb his marital peace.

Thus argued Mr. Thompson, and to Annie's secret delight he suffered her to pack up his portmanteau, stow away the multitudinous moth-boxes that littered every available table, and save him all the trouble of preparation. Then he sat down to a substantial tea at five o'clock, said good-bye to Harry with a false show of friendly regret, and finally, dutifully accompanied by his wife, walked down to the landing stage, whilst his luggage followed in a wheel-barrow.

Presently the smoke of the steamer became visible, discolouring the pure sky with a long line of black soot, and ten minutes afterwards, having affectionately embraced Annie—who, in her eagerness to see the last of him, did not shrink from the process quite as much as usual—and having, as a parting injunction, strenuously counselled her not to make a fool of herself in his absence, he stepped on board, with a mind still only partially at ease.

She stood and watched him depart. She saw his white handkerchief flutter for the last time from the steam boat's stern as the puffing monster glided round a point that hid her from vision. And then, all at once, a great load seemed lifted from her heart. She felt free, happy, ten years younger!

As she walked slowly back along the little white road, where the pink buds of the wild rose were just beginning to shoot forth like stars, and the blue hare-bells, with their big, deep cups nodded gracefully above the green grasses, whenever a bee flew into them or a slant of wind stirred them, she could have skipped from pure light-heartedness.

Liberty! Liberty! Oh! how sweet it was, after those five horrible weeks of corporeal and mental bondage. In these first exquisite moments of regained freedom, strange to say, she scarcely thought of Harry. It was enough joy to be alone, and rid of that dark presence which produced the same effect



upon her spirit as a thunder storm, holding it in leaden thrall and depriving it of all lightness and exhilaration. With Ebenezer by her side, she always seemed to lose her individuality. She was a cipher, a nonentity, completely submerged in the sea of his exacting and absorbent selfishness. It sucked the very life out of her, like some blood-thirsty vampire who robbed her of her vitality. But now, for the first time since her marriage, she felt an independent person again, entitled to hold and express opinions, and responsible for her actions.

Ebenezer's caution as to not making a fool of herself had irritated her intensely, nevertheless, this very sense of responsibility decided her to behave with additional caution and decorum. In vulgar language, she realized that she was on her own "hook," and not her husband's warning, which had only served to rasp her like a nutmeg grater, but her own innate modesty and womanly dignity, prompted her to be extra circumspect on account of the lesser restraint to which she was exposed.

As she neared the house, Harry, who had been watching for her return, came out to meet her.

"Hulloa!" he exclaimed, banteringly. "You managed that pretty well at any rate. I suppose there is no need to send a special messenger just yet after the clothes. Eh?" and he winked knowingly.

She bit her lip, but said nothing.

"I had no idea you were so brilliant a diplomatist," he went on, still in the same jesting tone.

She felt that she had laid herself open to these and similar remarks, nevertheless they jarred horribly. Her own conscience reproached her quite enough. Comments were wholly unneeded. But the fine graduations of feeling which kept her in a constant state of inward tumult, were lost upon Harry. His perceptions were not sharpened by the same gnawing passion. He loved, but he loved pleasantly and easily. At the present moment, he was more intent upon looking at the sky than at his companion. For the last two days it had clouded over towards evening, and it really seemed at last as if the anxiously awaited rain would fall before long. The night was very dull and still. Scarcely a breath stirred the smooth waters of the Fjord. Sullen, grey clouds wandered far down the mountains' weather-worn sides, clustering smoke-like upon their snow-crowned summits, and hiding them from view. These clouds had a weird and spectral appearance, as they

descended in misty wreaths that almost touched the earth. They intensified the solemn stillness, and rendered nature's beautiful loneliness even more striking than usual. Towards the south-west, a woolly look in the horizon proclaimed that a change in the weather was imminent, whilst the barometer which Harry had brought out from England had fallen rapidly during the last four-and-twenty hours. Every now and then the sinking sun struggled out, red as a ball of fire, and illumined the heavens with a lurid gleam, which presented a vivid contrast to the black sombre hills and their dark reflections. The scene was wild, almost savage, in its solitary grandeur, and awe-inspiring in the extreme. Harry, however, thought only of sport. He looked around him with a satisfied eye, whilst over Annie's spirit there crept a sense of sadness at the amazing littleness of human beings, when they stand face to face with nature, and forsake the busy cities produced by an active and ever-increasing civilization.

"Bravo! I do believe we are going to have a regular down-pour before long!" exclaimed Harry. "I'm tired of going out night after night and never getting anything bigger than a minnow. It's deuced slow work."

"Your luck will come when I have gone," said Annie, in unconscious accents of regret.

"By Jove! What shall I do with myself then? There will be no enduring existence."

"Oh! yes, there will, particularly if you catch a big salmon." And she smiled faintly.

The mere prospect of such a thing was delightful. With those great black clouds gathering overhead, he could not feel as low-spirited as he ought, or as the circumstances seemed to demand.

"Ah!" he said. "If we have rain and the river really rises, there may be a chance of getting a good fish after all."

"Of course there will," she returned, trying to conceal a certain unsteadiness of intonation. "I only regret that I shall not be here to witness your delight." She could not help feeling a little hurt to find that he thought rather more about his fishing, than he did of her approaching departure, but was too proud to let him see her vexation.

"Don't talk of your going away," he said with a slight sigh. "I cannot realize it."

"Neither can I. It seems too horrid to be true."

He pulled a wry face, then, with the happy knack of dismiss-

ing unpleasant subjects which was a special gift conferred on him, said: "Well! any way, we have a jolly day or two before us——"

"I'm not so sure of that," she interrupted. "Ebenezer is certain to send for me the instant he arrives. He won't let me stay here a minute longer than he can help. It is quite likely that I might have to start to-morrow morning."

"What, as soon as that, Annie?"

"Yes, if my lord and master takes it into his head to telegraph for me. He is due at Yokuldal at six o'clock. When I wake up, I fully expect to receive marching orders."

"We may only have this evening then, in which to wish each other good-bye?"

"Yes—at least we cannot count upon a longer time." And her lip quivered ominously.

"Annie," he said persuasively, "come out fishing with me to-night. Do, there's a darling. You've never been once all this while, and if the fish are sulky, as usual, we can sit out in the open air, and talk better than indoors. It's not so crampy."

"Say no, say no!" urged conscience in a distressingly aggressive fashion. "For goodness' sake be firm." But how could she? when it was the last evening they might ever spend in each other's company, the last chance of being together. Every moment was precious now. His looks, his smiles and words, were to her what gold is to a miser. Things to be greedily clutched at and cherished.

"Very well," she said, looking down till her soft, long eyelashes completely hid her shamed eyes. "When do you start?"

"The sooner the better. It is past seven. Jens will be here in a minute with the 'Stolkjærre.' He and I arranged this morning to drive about half-way up the river, and then fish downwards."

"But is there room for me? Are you quite sure?"

"Quite. If the worst comes to the worst you can sit on my knee."

She blushed up to the roots of her hair. A painful hot blush that made her cheeks burn.

"I wish you would not talk like that," she said with petulant reproach.

"Why not?" he asked mischievously. "You would not mind so very much, would you?"

"It—it—makes me feel, so—ve—very common," she said, with a growing inclination to cry.

It was no longer in her power to rebuke him as he deserved to be rebuked, nevertheless she felt keenly that a week ago he would not have dared to talk to her like this. The loss of self-respect wounded her to the quick. She was cruelly alive to the familiar manner in which he was already beginning to treat her, and the worst of it was, she could not blame him, but herself.

"I—I think," she said with tremulous dignity, "that I had better not go at all, if—if you are going to make vulgar jokes at my expense. You forget that I am not a milk-maid."

Her good angel was in the ascendant at this moment; but when a man and a woman are in love after their different fashions, she—because she idolizes and idealizes him; he—because he sees in her a pretty piece of pink and white flesh which takes his fancy, he is ever ready to play the part of tempter.

"Nonsense, Annie," he said soothingly. "What a little goose you are to be sure! I was only jesting. It would be hard indeed not to spend this last evening together, when it may be years before we pass another after a similar fashion. So run away, there's a good girl, and get your waterproof in case of rain, and put on the stoutest boots you possess, for I shall have to take you over some tolerably rough ground."

She re-entered the house at his bidding, as meekly as a lamb. The good angel was silenced, smothered.

A few minutes afterwards she jumped up into the "Stolk-jærre," and seated herself by Harry's side, Jens preceding them at a rapid pace.

Her heart thrilled with mingled joy and pain. She felt like a guilty thing, stealing out on some secret and unnatural errand, and yet she tried very hard to persuade herself that there was not the least harm in the action she was committing—that she would not mind Ebenezer knowing—no, not one bit. False and fallacious reasoning, which has helped many a woman to sully her spotless fame. Annie sought to silence the voice of her inward monitor, and to believe that she was doing nothing wrong.

But the sombre clouds overhead, the cold, black hills, the airless and oppressive atmosphere, all seemed, with speechless yet irresistible influence, to declare the contrary. Nature, the great impartial mother of things living and things dead, was dull, heavy, mournful, as if she grieved to see so young

and bright a creature nearing that dark abyss of which remorse is the sole presiding goddess, and in which the fruits gathered are but Dead Sea apples to the taste. If a frail boat is dashed against a rock-bound shore, it perishes. If a woman loves one man when she is chained to another, and allows her affection to conquer her, she breaks either her heart or her reputation, if not both. For she is a poor, weak thing, governed by impulse and emotion, and in the battle of life, when through one cause or another she deserts the ranks of her regiment, she fares but badly.

True, a caged bird inspires pity, but he who will drink his water, eat his hempseed, and not long for a larger space in which to flutter his wings, but just be content with what he can get, is far better off than his more adventurous neighbour, who escapes into the wind and the rain to seek for a living. The wind and the rain buffet him and drench him, until at last he is glad to creep away into any quiet corner. Safety and repose are inestimable blessings, which women only know how to value when they have lost them.

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## CHAPTER XXIV.

### HARRY HOOKS HIS FIRST SALMON.

ONE of the best pools on the river was the "Samkom," an abbreviation of "Sammen Kommen" or come together; so named from a tributary stream that flowed into the Sandéthal. Jens declared that it would be wiser to begin fishing from this point, as he doubted whether the salmon had yet made their way in any numbers to the upper pools, having already tried them once or twice without success.

Consequently they descended from the "Stolkjærre," and turned Thekla and her foal, for the night, into an old out-building with a thatched roof, on which flourished a small crop of grasses, wild flowers and red sorrel. They gave them some hay, and left them to their own devices, for in Norway nothing is ever stolen. The people are scrupulously honest, and you can leave your most treasured possession, a well stocked fly-book, or favourite fishing-rod, for hours by the road-side, without any fear of finding them fingered.

The "Samkom" was a fine large pool. The river here



swept round a sharp curve, and widened out to twice its original size. On the far side it was shallow, and two or three adventurous alders had sprung up between the big grey stones, which the dry season left exposed to view, but where the main stream flowed, the pool was very deep, with a strong current in the centre, edged by a smooth, dark backwater that swirled leisurely round, bearing on its surface a few bubbles and flecks of foam.

When the river was high, the best casts were from the bank, but when low, as at present, it was necessary to use a boat, in order to reach the spots where the fish principally lay, and one was therefore always kept moored to the land.

They now stepped into it, Annie seating herself in the extreme bow, so as to be out of the way. Jens bent his strong back nearly double, as he pulled the boat up against the stream to the head of the pool. The tail part was generally the most prolific of sport, but in long continued fine weather, the fish were apt to congregate just at the junction of the two rivers. Harry now commenced casting, whilst Jens kept the oars steadily, but softly moving, so as to prevent the boat from drifting too fast.

It was a wild and picturesque scene, rendered still more so by the gathering masses of sombre cloud that all but enveloped the mountains, and which, parting here and there for a moment, revealed a glimpse of some cold, white peak, towering high in solitary glory. Then fresh clouds, dark and moisture-charged, came rolling up from the south-west, and as suddenly blotted it from vision. A death-like stillness prevailed throughout the valley. The voice of the birds was hushed; not a breath stirred the leaves; on the motionless air, the fragrance of pink and white clover, of wild thyme and herbage, hung heavy. One might almost have fancied that life was everywhere extinct, had it not been for the prodigious numbers of gnats, flies, midges and mosquitoes that danced around. They were a perfect torment, as the fisherman soon discovered to his cost; every inch of exposed epidermis was attacked in its turn. Small as was the enemy, his persistency rendered him peculiarly irritating and difficult to cope with. Seized by a murderous instinct, and exasperated out of all forbearance, you had no sooner succeeded in inflicting a merciless death upon one, than a whole troop of others immediately took its place. And they seemed to take a fiendish delight in finding out the most sensitive portions of your body, such as your neck, ears and wrists.

The river here

So great was the variety of these small marauders, and so determined their persecution, that Harry found himself attentively noting their respective peculiarities. First came a fly with a yellow body and red eyes. He was a very disagreeable fellow, who refused to leave until completely gorged. His place was promptly supplied by a gaudy little gentleman, bright green in hue, who took his meal more daintily, though none the less surely. Then followed one with gossamer wings, and a beautiful blue head. He proved a comparatively light feeder. Meantime, the midges and mosquitoes were securing their full share, and could not be beaten off even by clouds of tobacco-smoke. But almost worse than these was the blackfly, big as a bee, and twice as venomous, who eluded every effort at capture with baffling dexterity. This mixed tribe danced and buzzed and stung, stung and buzzed and danced, in the most truly maddening fashion. It is surprising how such small creatures can give rise to so huge an irritation; the most placid-tempered man on earth cannot remain placid under their inroads.

"Bother these flies," exclaimed Harry, impatiently. "It's impossible to fish for them. They leave you no peace."

"Zure zign vi shall 'ave rain," said Jens, on whose hardened skin the tormentors took but little effect. "God elv zoon, and plenty, plenty fish in opper pools and all."

"I hope so, for they don't seem to be about to-night. My belief is, there is not a salmon in the river."

Jens shook his head and smiled.

"Mange dere, if only dey would take; but 'Lax' no like zun and zmall 'Elv.'"

"That's all very well," rejoined Harry, incredulously, "but if there were as many fish in the pools as you make out, depend upon it we should have caught one before now."

The words were no sooner out of his mouth, than he felt a dead weight at the end of his line when he tried to withdraw it, preparatory to making a fresh cast.

"Hulloa!" he said to Jens. "What's the matter? I can't get my fly out of the water. Have you any rocks here?"

"No, sare!" responded Jens, his countenance suddenly lighting up with an enthusiasm that transformed it entirely. "It is one salmon."

And sure enough so it proved to be, and, judging from the

deep way in which he had taken the fly, a big one into the bargain.

"By Jove!" ejaculated Harry, all in a flutter of excitement at this unexpected and long-desired event. "You don't say so." Whereupon he made a rapid step forwards, for what with the midges, Annie's presence, and one thing and another, he had been fishing carelessly, and was by no means prepared for so great a stroke of good luck, though it was none the less welcome on account of its suddenness.

But alas! alas! he did not sufficiently consider the crankiness of the boat beneath him, which had been hastily put together, and cost but thirty kronas, and this quick movement on his part was fatal. She gave a big lurch, and at the same moment the salmon, who had hitherto remained motionless, began to run. All of a sudden Harry lost his balance. His legs slid from under him, and went up in the air with a flourish. He fell flat on his back into the bottom of the boat, and—oh! horror of horrors, the rod flew out of his hands.

Before he could save it, or indeed realized the full extent of the disaster, line, reel, salmon, had all disappeared. When he rose to his feet, both sore and bruised, he found himself without any means of pursuing his evening's sport. Here was a pretty position. He was destitute of everything.

"Oh dear! oh dear!" he exclaimed, feeling ready to sit down and have a good cry. "What on earth shall I do now? Was there ever such confounded luck?"

"Meget daarlig" (very bad), meget, meget daarlig," responded Jens, sympathetically, for though amused at the incident, he also was intensely chagrined by the loss of the fish. "Dat zalmon, 'ee four—five-and-twenty pounder. I zee 'is tail when 'ee make one run."

"But what's to be done now, Jens? I've lost my rod and line," said Harry, still overwhelmed by the magnitude of the disaster, and failing to derive consolation even from Annie's soft looks. "We can't catch fish with nothing."

Jens rowed to the shore, got out, squatted himself down on the bank, filled an extra big pipe, and for a few minutes thought with all the intensity of which his brain was capable. He might be a slow-witted giant, according to the nineteenth century idea, but at all events, in his own quiet, ponderous way, he was an extremely sensible and reliable one. In this conjunction Harry looked to him and him alone for help.

Presently Jens spoke.

"Dat god rod," he said, weightily, "very god rod. No do lose. Vi must try find it igjen."

"But how, Jens, how?" asked Harry eagerly. "The pool is awfully deep here."

"Shallower further on. If zalmon well hooked, 'ee drag line down Elv, before it break. 'Ee no can go far, because of Oppen (Upper) Fos."

"Well! but what then? I don't see how we can recover the rod for all that. It's like looking for a needle in a bundle of hay, just so much waste of time and trouble."

Jens looked at him with a smile of indulgent superiority. When you feel yourself superior you can afford to be indulgent to those less highly gifted.

"You wait 'ere," he said. "Zit down till I come back. No be away very long."

"Why, where are you going?" asked Harry, in surprise.

"To de 'ouse of one man, who live not far off. I go *laane* (borrow) zome wood, zome nails, and zome rope. To-morrow vi vill pay him for 'is tings."

"Oh! if you want money, take this." And Harry thrust a two-krone piece into Jens' hand. That worthy nodded his head in token of satisfaction, and started off at a great pace, bounding over the boulders like a chamois. In an incredibly short space of time, he re-appeared, having been successful in obtaining the requisite articles. Harry now dimly began to understand his object in purchasing them. Jens at once proceeded to take out his big knife, and to lop the log of wood which he had brought with him into shape. He cut it down until it was between four and five feet long, and smoothed off the principal excrescences. When it was apparently to his mind, he studded the entire surface over with very strong, long nails, until the log being round, presented quite a formidable *chevaux de frise*. Finally he attached a couple of stout ropes about thirty yards each in length, and when all was ready, announced his intention of dragging the river with this primitive apparatus, in the forlorn hope of lighting upon the missing rod.

"Now, vi must go in boat igjen," he said to Harry, "and you row while I work drag. Lady stop on bank."

"Do you mind waiting by yourself?" said Harry, turning apologetically to Annie. "It seems rather shabby to ask you to

come out fishing, and then leave you all alone ; but I never contemplated such a set-out as this."

"Of course not," she replied. "Never trouble about me. I am quite capable of amusing myself ; besides I can see what you are about from the shore, which is not like losing you altogether."

"Call out if you get tired or want anything."

"I will, though neither is likely, and I am quite content to stay where I am, since," she added with a smile, "after our recent experiences in the boat, I have a wholesome dread of being upset."

Thus assured, Harry shoved off into deep water. And then began a long and fruitless search.

Jens plumped the drag in, at least fifty times, allowed it to sink to the bottom, then shortening the ropes, pulled them carefully up again. But always with no result. At last they both despaired and were on the point of giving in. Jens, however, possessed a tenacious disposition, and he did not like being beaten. When his companion declared that further efforts were useless, he insisted on making one final attempt some twenty yards further down the stream. Harry protested, but let the boat drift gently to the desired spot, where he kept her stationary.

Once more, in went the drag, but it must be confessed that over the spirits of both, a settled despondency had stolen, which they strove in vain to dissipate. Jens commenced hoisting his apparatus doggedly and without hope. By degrees the heavy wet log came into sight, looking black and smooth as it issued from the water. Ha ! why what's this ? Do his eyes deceive him ?

No, no, no. He gives a loud hurrah, for there—hanging tightly to a rusty nail, whose flattened head has detained it, is a loop of pale green waterproof line. He seizes it gleefully and slowly begins to coil it up. Oh ! joy. He had not secured many yards, before he felt a weight, but still the line yielded as he pulled. The reel was unwinding itself at the bottom of the water, and the inference was that it remained attached to the rod.

This supposition proved correct, for after a few breathless minutes of suspense, during which Jens hauled more and more gingerly, the rod itself appeared, dripping wet, but otherwise unharmed by its immersion. Harry gave another yell of delight, as he saw his beloved split cane, which he thought he



had lost for ever, and starting up, very nearly capsized the boat for the second time.

Certainly it was an unparalleled stroke of good fortune, recovering the missing property, especially as, had it not been for Jens' perseverance, it undoubtedly would have remained in the river bed.

Oddly enough too, not a thing was broken save the casting line.

Jens' honest countenance shone with legitimate triumph.

Directly they landed, Harry shook him by the hand, and exclaimed, "Well done, Jens, well done! You're a grand fellow, and I'm most awfully obliged to you."

At these words, there mounted to the giant's sun-tanned face, over which the flies and midges had so little power, a blush, warm and sudden as a woman's. If Jens' exterior was rough, his heart was soft; and praise, honestly merited, sank into it. Harry emptied the whole of the contents of his tobacco pouch into that of his comrade, who was thus rendered superlatively happy.

All these doings, as may be imagined, occasioned a long delay, and it was half-past ten by the time they were able to begin fishing again.

But either the fish were off the rise, or the monster who had taken Harry's rod was a solitary specimen. Anyhow, they tried the Oppper Fos, Ned Fos, Bridge, Kirke (Church) and Sten (Stone) pools all in succession, fishing them thoroughly but without success. Even the brown trout seemed to feel the oppression produced by those dark, threatening clouds overhead. They refused to forsake their haunts.

Harry was terribly discouraged. To spend ten whole days without catching a single salmon, and then to miss the only chance he had had, was very different from what his fancy had pictured in coming to Norway, and it was enough to make a man low-spirited.

So far, the sport had proved a ghastly failure, a continual disappointment. As he flung himself on the grass by Annie's side, he vowed he was sick of it, and yet, even as he sat and grumbled with all the fluency and unreasonableness of youth, unconsciously the fascination of those mighty hills, of the green, gliding river, flowing through the narrow fertile valley, of the unwordable calm, and indescribable tranquillity characteristic of the country, but which the semi-darkness of a northern night rendered doubly great, stole like a charm over his

spirit. He, who had lived in a grimy square, ornamented by stunted trees, whose eyes had rested upon leads and chimneys and house-tops, from his childhood upwards, who was accustomed to crowded streets, bustling thoroughfares, and jostling people, was sensitive in the extreme to the beauty by which he now found himself surrounded.

Even although he *had* "muffed" his salmon, how he pitied those poor "Londoners," doing the weary treadmill of Rotten Row, Sandown, Ascot, &c., and trying to delude themselves into the idea that when they climbed up each other's staircases, blocked up each other's rooms, and growled at each other's dinners, they were enjoying themselves. Infatuated beings! whose whole lives were spent artificially, and who preferred Society to Nature.

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## CHAPTER XXV.

### THE "FOS" POOL.

"THIS is getting too monotonous for anything," exclaimed Harry, desisting for a few minutes from his labours, and addressing Annie. "My arms quite ache with so much unprofitable casting."

"Do they?" she said in return. "Why not go home in that case? It's getting very late."

She did not like confessing even to herself how terribly disappointed she was at the way things had turned out. In coming with him, she had fondly imagined that he would take every opportunity of sitting by her side, of murmuring tender farewells into her ear, and of displaying deep emotion at the near prospect of losing her. This is what her fancy had pictured.

But instead of these hopes being realized, what between the episode of the rod, and his intense anxiety to catch a salmon, which to all appearances completely overpowered every other sentiment, she had spent most of the evening in wandering on the banks alone, and had seen next to nothing of him. She might just as well have stayed at home, for all the satisfaction she had derived from his society, and not done violence to her conscience. True, that instead of feeling very cross, and sick at heart, as she undoubtedly did, she should rather have been thankful to circumstances for keeping her out of mischief, and

not exposing her to temptation. But she wasn't thankful. No, not one bit. People never are, when they ought to be. On the contrary, a deadly depression was creeping over her, and rendering her whole spirit downcast and sad. She could not combat a presentiment of approaching evil. It seemed to lower in the very air.

Nevertheless, when Harry came and seated himself beside her, she brightened up immediately. If he would but grant her half-an-hour, instead of appearing utterly engrossed in his fishing, then, perhaps, the wild yearnings of her heart might be appeased. At present they consumed her with a burning fever. She hardly knew what it was that she wanted—at least she did not like to define it—but an aching void existed, which he alone could fill.

Her spirits, however, had hardly commenced to rise, when they were prostrated by Jens. She had never come so near hating him as at this moment, when he interfered to take Harry from her.

"No rest 'ere," he said decidedly. "Must go to big 'Fos' pool. Vi must try every place."

Harry was thoroughly weary, but he felt ashamed to own to his fatigue; so once more the trio started to their feet, Jens leading the way along a tortuous and almost indistinguishable track, now brushing past trees, and through long grasses, anon striding over bogs and ditches, again stepping lightly from boulder to boulder. Annie brought up the rear, following as best she could.

The big "Fos" was about a mile inland from where the mouth of the river widened out into the Fjord. Soon they began to hear the dull roar of the waterfall, sweeping from one steep ledge of rock to another, and shortly arrived in full view of it. In spite of the recent dry weather, it presented a magnificent spectacle, as it came tumbling down in a creamy mass, spotless as the snow on the surrounding peaks. Its unbroken whiteness was so soft, pure, and glancing, that it positively dazzled the eye. From its midst, rose showers of spray, which in the daytime were gorgeous with prismatic colours, and which, scattering far and wide on reaching a certain height, filled the air with a cool and penetrating moisture. Then, as the fall, in wild disorder, broke among the big, black boulders beneath, it dashed into a thousand waves that splashed, and leapt, and foamed, until they disappeared in a long line of clear green bubbles. They in their place gave way to a deep whirl-

pool, on whose treacherous surface circled dead flies and fallen leaves, bits of stick, and pale yellow scum, till finally, escaping from its caressing suction, the river passed on in one broad, noble stream, which gradually emptied itself into the waters of the Fjord. A little below the whirlpool was a grand place for fish. They congregated here in great numbers, waiting for a favourable opportunity to get up the fall.

Jens, than whom a keener sportsman never trod earth, now placed the rod in Harry's hands, and indicated to him the exact spot where he was to commence casting. Annie looked at her watch. It was dreadfully late. Past twelve o'clock, and her disappointment had reached a culminating point. One by one, as the hours advanced, her hopes had died away. Since Harry proposed fishing again, she might just as well make the best of her way back. She could not sit up all night, on the forlorn chance of his condescending to say good-bye. She was vexed and angry with herself, for having been such a fool as to come at all.

"I—I think I had better be going home," she said tremulously. "I'm getting sleepy, and this precious salmon that ought to rise, but won't, will keep you happily employed until daybreak."

He turned round sharply, and looked straight into her eyes. They were dim and clouded, full of gathering tears. He could see by them that something was wrong, even had not the tone of her voice betrayed her.

Perhaps he felt some compunction for the scant courtesy with which he had hitherto treated her, and was even a trifle ashamed of being so entirely absorbed in his own amusements. Anyhow he resolved to make amends.

"Oh! no, it won't!" he said, in a whisper meant only for her ears. "Sit down a minute or two, and I will hurry over this pool as fast as I can. I don't want to fish it one bit really, only Jens makes such a point of my doing so. When he has taken down the rod, I will send him on, and we will have a good talk."

"It's too late," she said, with a shake of her head. "The time," and her lip quivered, "has gone by for having a good talk. You should have expressed your wish sooner."

"Bah! What does the time signify, when at twelve o'clock it is so light still, that I could almost see to read? We have not had a word together yet. Don't be impatient, Annie, on this our last night."

*He* reminded *her* of the fact, when he had already wasted so many precious minutes, even hours, during which her heart had ached with an ever-growing pain. Verily it struck her with a sense of absurdity. But a woman in love is a strange anomaly. You never can quite tell what she will and what she will not do. Sometimes a whole loaf fails to satisfy her—especially if it can be easily obtained; whilst at others, when difficulties and impediments exist, she is content with the merest crumb.

There is no law; each feminine heart is a separate puzzle and study.

Without another word Annie sat herself down, whilst he moved on a few paces, and began fishing.

The banks on either side of the "Fos" pool, were green as fresh grasses, and dripping reeds and rushes could make them. They rose steeply up, seeming to encircle in a verdant zone the snowy water-fall, crowned by lofty pines, whose bare, straight stems stood out black as ink against the darkening sky. The scene was exquisitely beautiful, and the dull monotonous roar of the water, as it hurried on, ever on to the sea, produced a strangely soothing effect. It lulled and quieted her overwrought nerves, and made her forget the passage of time. A dreaminess stole over her, which robbed thought of its bitter intensity. That liquid lullaby hushed the fevered workings of her brain to rest, making them flow in more peaceful channels.

It was like morphia taken morally. The acuteness of sensation vanished. Passion seemed to fade away, whilst the wild regrets and tumultuous longings of disappointed youth died a temporary death.

She turned round, planted her two elbows on the ground, and looked down.

What a minute world was here! She opened her eyes wider, and gazed at it with ever increasing admiration. The grass was the most beautiful thing she had ever seen. Beneath—a verdant mass of pointed blade and rounded leaf; spikelet crossing spikelet in delicate variety. Above—a perfect forest of tall, feathering grasses, some light yellow in tone, some brown, some vividly green, the whole interspersed by red sorrel, and harebells larger than a big-sized thimble, most of them a deep, soft, heavenly blue which matched the skies during the last week, but with a few, here and there, bleached almost white by the sun. Then there were yellow ox-eyed daisies, that lifted high



their star-like heads, pink and white clover in profusion, golden buttercups with glossy leaves, and the dandelion, so beautiful in spite of its commonness, and quantities of little white stone-wort, and pink ragged-robin, wild parsley and others, whose names she did not know. Struck by the lavish beauty around her, she gazed earnestly down into the cool and fragrant depths, redolent with sweet smells. Then she became more and more impressed by the marvellous, though minute, life teeming within a few inches of her face.

A tiny green caterpillar, frightened by her near proximity, rolled itself up into a little tight ball, and clung so motionless to the stem of a bending daisy that it was almost impossible to distinguish him from the bud. She knew he was there, however, and having marked the place, removed her eyes for an instant, only to find him again with the utmost difficulty, and to become alive to the fact that he was surrounded by dozens of companions as undiscernible as himself, unless searched for with similar care. She watched an industrious ant, toil up and down the long blades, with a perseverance from which many a human being might have derived a lesson. Then, a fat, brown-bodied spider let himself gingerly down, and nimbly wove a gossamer thread from one segmented clover leaf to another, whilst white-winged flies and moths skimmed daintily along, alighting now and again on some thin stalk, that swayed beneath their weight. And as she gazed, a profound sense of the large, and all-embracing character of the Universal Mother flooded her soul, making it keenly conscious of the nothingness of the flesh. And yet the poor nothings feel. They cannot help it. No philosophy ever succeeds in quelling the joys, loves, sorrows, hopes that spring eternal in the human breast. Man may realize the small place which individually he occupies in the scheme of Creation. The ant, the caterpillar, and the spider, are all akin to him, but his is the highest organization, and so long as he lives, his feeble body is acutely sensitive to pain, his heart lends itself to every emotion, and his brain forms a centre round which distracting thought revolves in wearying succession. What if feeling passes, and twenty, thirty, a hundred years hence, is engulfed in the sea of oblivion? Life, to poor struggling mortals, is very real and very sharp while it endures. We suffer in the Present, no matter how great and glorious the rewards of the Future.

As she looked at the green grasses, swarming with tiny, sentient creatures, as she gazed up at the still sky, and at the

solemn mountains whose dark outlines were shrouded by gathering mists and resting clouds, the soul—the higher and imperishable portion of her being—spoke aloud, crying out in sympathy with the beautiful, created World.

"Oh! God! oh, great first Cause! Oh, mighty principle of Life!" it said, "no matter by what name, or by what religions Thou art worshipped. Names are forgotten, religions die and give place to fresh ones; but, *Thou* continuest. Man, thy most perfect work, acknowledges the presence of a force above and beyond his finite comprehension. Intellect cannot probe it. Science cannot destroy it, and at moments like these, that force makes us bow down in reverential worship, before the Power, the Deity, the What-you-will, which rules the universe. A presiding Spirit dwells in the air we breathe, on the earth we tread, in the unknown regions of space that confound our limited vision. Man, Doubter, Atheist, thou who scoffest at God, use thy eyes and look around thee. Nature will teach thee what a poor, weak puppet thou art, and how senseless and vainglorious are the words, 'I deny. I believe not.' I, I, I! What is 'I,' that great and large personality in the speaker's fancy? Only a few composite atoms, that soon are scattered to the dust. And yet these same atoms dare to set up their puny opinions against the grand fixed laws of which they know so little. Miserable fools, to whose hearts beauty and purity and calm cannot reach, and therefore fail to sink into them as God-like truths."

"No luck, Annie. I am tired to death, and out of temper into the bargain. Try and console me if you can."

It was Harry's voice that interrupted her meditations, and in one second recalled her to earth.

"I cannot console you," she said, wearily. "I want consoling myself."

The utter dejection of her tones moved him. He was sorry for her, very sorry. He felt that it might have been better if they had never met, and he was conscious of being unworthy of the passionate love he had inspired.

"Annie," he said, motioning to her to sit down under the lee of a great grey rock. "You are tired, and consequently out of sorts. It has been my fault for keeping out so late. I am afraid I have been very selfish. Poor little girl," and he touched her hand. "You are quite cold, and I, big brute that I was, thought only of that horrid fishing."

A single kind word from him was sufficient to upset her.

Throughout the evening her nerves had been in a high state of tension. They could endure the strain no longer.

"Harry—Harry," she cried, with a sudden outburst of emotion. "Don't be good to me. I can't bear it."

"But I'm not good. On the contrary I've been very thoughtless and inconsiderate."

"Do you know what I wish?" she said in a low voice of concentrated passion.

"No. What is it?"

"I wish to God I were dead—that I could die now, this moment."

He was startled by the vehemence and earnestness with which she spoke; for she said the words as if she meant them, and they were very painful ones to him, who in the last few months had begun to find life so pleasant, and who looked forward to deriving so much enjoyment from it.

"Hush, Annie. Why, oh! why do you say such terrible things?"

She looked at him. It was past midnight, but she could still see the shocked expression of his clear eyes. In another hour or two, dawn would begin to break, and dissipate the tender twilight that, even now, had scarce deepened into night. But there would be no Dawn for her, nothing but perpetual darkness. A rush of bitter thought flooded her being. The Future presented such an intolerable prospect.

"Why?" she echoed, wringing her hands in anguish.

"Listen, and I will tell you, why I would give everything I possess in this world, to be lying dead at your feet. Harry, I think I should be happy, even in Death, if I felt that you were near me. You have often wished to know the reason which induced me to become the wife of Mr. Thompson. Now that we are about to part, in all probability for ever, I am ready to gratify your curiosity.

"Don't tell me if it is painful to you," he interposed. "I would rather remain in ignorance than add to your distress."

"Painful! How can it be painful in comparison with my daily life, and with what I have to bear? And yet if all were to come over again, I should repeat the action that has embittered my days, and put an extinguisher on every hope and aspiration."

"You puzzle me," he said, with a bewildered air. "What do you mean?"

"When I first made Ebenezer's acquaintance, I had just

returned from a finishing school, and was seventeen years of age. I disliked him from the first moment I saw him, and, although it is wicked to say so, have disliked him ever since. He is, and always was, intensely antipathetic to me. I tell you this so as not to conceal my faults. I wish you to know the worst of me. No doubt it would be more seemly to pretend to care for the man who is my husband, but to-night you shall hear nothing but the truth from my lips. I had received a good education and was well brought up. Having no brothers and sisters, my parents never grudged me anything that money could purchase. My father was a mill owner, and resided in one of the chief manufacturing towns of Lancashire. In those days he appeared to be well off, and I, for one, never dreamt of the horrible events that in two short years were destined to take place. To make a long story short, he suffered severe losses, which followed each other in rapid succession. Things went from bad to worse. The mortgagees, to whom the mill virtually belonged, foreclosed, and one fine morning, the bailiffs entered our peaceful home, and seized all the furniture. What did my father do?" And she gave a little, hysterical laugh that rang out clear and penetrating. "He blew out his brains. He was a courageous man, but his mind had become weakened by disaster. He sank before our very eyes, and we were left alone, my mother and I, without a penny in the world. She had no jointure, no settlements, and nothing was saved out of the wreck. To my dying day I shall never forget that time." She paused a moment, as if recalling its horrors, then resumed in hurried utterances:

"We were indebted to friends for our daily bread. They took us in out of charity. We stayed with them a week, a month, but we could not live so for ever, besides we were both of us too proud to be dependent on others. I was young and strong, and there were people who thought me pretty. I hoped that my good looks, such as they were, would befriend me in my search for work. Alas! I found them an hindrance rather than otherwise. Everybody seemed to mistrust the combination of youth and an attractive appearance. Had I been plain or deformed, I might perhaps have succeeded in getting a situation, but my own sex looked upon me with suspicion. I went the round of all the agencies. I put my pride in my pocket, and tried in turn to get a place as nursery-governess, mother's-help, and lady's-maid. But the result was always the same. There were dozens of people eager to fill

the posts I asked for, all of whom possessed far more experience, and were better qualified than myself. None but those who have been similarly situated can form an idea how hard it is for ladies, in reduced circumstances, to find work. They are of no use to anyone; their poor little accomplishments are scoffed at. All the things they can't do, they are expected to do, and all the ones they can, appear not to be required. The commonest woman, who knows how to baste a leg of mutton, roll a dumpling, or sweep a floor, is a mine of wealth in comparison with a girl, on whose education hundreds of pounds have been spent in finishing governesses or fashionable boarding schools. The former has a market value; the latter none. Her white hands can only tinkle the piano, or bring forth an indifferent water-colour."

"What did you do?" asked Harry, struck by the force of her reasoning. "How did you manage to subsist?"

"I next visited the shops, many of them the very ones we had dealt with for years, and begged the owners out of pity to employ me. Pity!" and her young voice rang with scorn. "Where is such a thing to be found, when people have lost their money, and when every person you come across is afraid that you are going to beg? Your best friends shun you like the pestilence, or else invent a thousand excuses, the flimsiness of which is patent. No, no, pity is a fine sentiment to talk about, but it does not exist in reality."

"Oh! Annie, what a bitter experience you seem to have had of the world, already. And you are so young! Quite a child in point of years."

She sat straight upright, locked her hands over her knees, and gazed drearily out before her.

"Yes," she said in a subdued voice. "And yet, looking back on all my misfortunes, I don't think I ever was really unhappy until I married Ebenezer. Now," shooting a swift glance at her companion, "I know what it is to feel the sharpest pain that a woman can endure."

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### THE LAST TIME.

HE did not ask her what she meant. Perhaps he guessed, for a lump rose up in his throat. She was silent a second or two, then again continued:



"To be brief, we supported ourselves after a fashion by taking in plain needle-work. We worked like slaves for ten, twelve hours a day, in order to gain the barest livelihood. I often think of those days when I hear Ebenezer grumbling at his food, and remember how frequently we went supperless to bed. Rich people have no idea what privations the poor undergo. Not one in a hundred knows what the sensation of real hunger is like. I adored my mother, and it was terrible to me to see her suffering from positive want—she, who, since her childhood upwards, had been accustomed to the refinements and luxuries of life. She never uttered a word of complaint, but her health began to fail, and I knew that she required comforts, beyond my power to give. To watch her growing daily thinner and paler, as she bent in unremitting toil over that hateful work, filled me with a kind of savage despair. All this while Ebenezer was constant in his attentions. To do him justice, he did not desert us, as so many of our friends did, on account of our poverty. On the contrary, during the next few months he proposed three or four times, but I could not bring myself to accept him, for though touched by his constancy, I loathed the very sight of his little bilious face. It inspired me with the same feeling as does a repulsive reptile. He, however, would never take no for an answer, and as we grew poorer and poorer, I began to feel as if the web of Fate were being tightly drawn around me. It was a horrible sensation. You felt just as you might do if you were being sucked down by that whirlpool, yonder." And she pointed to the dark, revolving water, boiling weird-like at her feet.

"Yes, yes, I can imagine it," said Harry, deeply interested. "Pray go on."

"One day," resumed Annie, "I returned to our miserable lodgings, after a fruitless search for work. I was weary and dejected, all the world seemed against us, and as the months dragged away one by one, I lost courage. The future frightened me, for I did not see how we could possibly keep the wolf from our door. Well! I reached home, only to find my mother fainting on the floor. Do you know what was the matter with her?" and Annie's dark eyes dilated. "She was *starving*! Of course, many people have starved to death before now, but starvation is an awful thing to witness in the person of one you love. Something seemed to go snap within me, and from that moment I was a different being. I made up my mind

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there and then that I would marry Ebenezer, subject to certain conditions. Those conditions were, that he should give my mother a home as long as she lived, and not let her want for anything. He accepted my sacrifice, though, doubtless, I ought not to owe him a grudge on that account. It was a pure bargain. He had eight hundred a year, with prospects of an increased salary. So you see," lifting up her large, luminous eyes to his, "I told you the truth, when I said I married for money."

"I should say you married for actual food," he said shortly, "and from sheer necessity."

She gave a little, bitter laugh, full of pain that she no longer sought to disguise.

"Necessity. Ah! how many girls have been driven to marry men they dislike, from a similar cause? Numbers of us have indeed no choice. It is beggary or matrimony, and if in desperation we choose the latter, then we are taunted as being mercenary. Lucky is the woman who has it in her power to select the husband of her heart, for from one reason or another we are continually being forced into selling ourselves, however much we may hate the proceeding. We are so weak, so dreadfully handicapped in the struggle for existence. Our physical organization, and our miserable, flimsy education, combine to weigh us down when we must work for a living. Men have so much the best of it in this world, and so thoroughly understand the art of oppressing the weak. But I am wandering from my story. Once settled, I hurried on my marriage with indecent haste. There was, indeed, nothing to wait for, and luckily Ebenezer was willing. A fortnight later, I became his wife. You know how long I have been married. Already," and her voice grew tremulous with a scorn too deep-rooted for words, "he talks of breaking his promise, and loses no opportunity of reminding me that I was a beggar when he took compassion on me, and would still be one, were it not for his bounty."

"The brute," ejaculated Harry, with clenched teeth. "He deserves a good hiding."

"I might have grown to be fond of him in time," she went on, with gathering emotion, "if only I could have respected him. But how can you love a man, whom you distrust thoroughly? It is not possible. Still that forms no excuse for me. Because I could not care for him, there was no reason why I should care for anyone else." And the color suddenly

flamed up into her face. "My life would have been far, far easier had only my heart remained silent. But it was not to be. Ebenezer destroyed every germ of love when he hinted at repudiating his part of our contract, and now I"—shuddering violently—"I feel very often as if I should repudiate mine also. His baseness makes my folly seem less great, and yet, I know, I know that this is not the proper way to look at things. It only shows how I have fallen." Here her voice broke, and she burst into a storm of passionate tears.

Harry was deeply shocked and distressed by the narrative she had confided to his ears.

"Don't cry, Annie," he said, putting his arm round her waist, and drawing her to him. "Don't cry, my poor little darling. You have indeed had terrible hard lines, but pray God, the worst is over."

"Over!" she sighed. "No; it is only beginning. The sharpest part of the fight has to come." And then she rested her head on his shoulder, and sobbed aloud. She could not help it. It seemed so hard when things might have gone well with her instead of badly, and when a single stroke of Fortune's wheel might have made all the difference between happiness and misery.

The sight of her grief agitated him. He was not one to witness a woman's tears, especially when, as in the present case, he could make a pretty shrewd guess at their cause. The only way he could think of to dry them was by kissing them away, and this he did very effectually.

The heavy clouds seemed to wrap both him and Annie in a clinging embrace that, combined with the languorous air, and the splashing, falling water, served to intoxicate their senses.

She yielded herself up to the sweetness of his lips. They sent a warm thrill of delight through her frame, and every nerve quivered in response. It was the last time—the last time. So she silenced her scruples. For the rest of her life she could atone for this one great wrong, by being additionally proper and well-behaved. What sophistry! when it was the wrong she intended garnering up in her heart like a treasure, not the good. How cunningly and curiously people delude themselves, how tortuously they reason, in order to justify evil.

Nevertheless Annie could not succeed in silencing the still small voice within her. With all her faults, she possessed too many noble qualities for the baser ones to obtain an easy victory.

As his kisses grew hotter and fiercer she shrank away from them, and a great horror, a species of vehement self-loathing, filled her being. The barrier that rendered their love unlawful rose up like a prison wall.

"Oh!" she cried suddenly, freeing herself from his grasp. "Don't, don't. I am not altogether bad, although you treat me as if I were, and I don't wonder at it. But I know what is right all the same. My mother," with a choking sob, "is a good, pure woman, and it would break her heart if she saw me at this moment. It does not follow that one is wholly wicked, because, because—Oh! can't you understand? Harry," and she held out both her hands with a beseeching gesture, "go away. Leave me. You and I must part, and never meet again, unless—" But she did not finish the sentence.

When a man inspires a life-long passion, he cannot remain insensible to the fact. However unworthy he may be, it makes an impression on his heart. It is something to be loved well and truly, something ever to be grateful for. Her emotion communicated itself to him.

"Part!" he cried wildly, seizing her by her slender wrist. "Indeed I won't. You love me, and are mine. Deny it if you dare."

"And if I were yours, what would you do with me? You could not marry me. I should be a disgrace to you and to myself too. How could we be happy under such circumstances?"

"You don't care for me, or you would not talk like that. We can go to America or Australia."

She quivered from head to foot, then she said in a curiously quiet voice:

"I don't think you quite understand me. I am not a good woman, but I am not such a bad one as you evidently believe; and my way of loving is not to bring shame on the object of my love. Draw what conclusions you like, Harry, but I care for you a great deal more than you care for me, and shall never forget you as long as I live. Good-bye, dear," and the little head, held so high only a minute before, drooped sadly. "May God bless you, and give you a long and happy life. As for myself, were it not for my mother, I wish that I were in my grave."

He took her two hands in his, and showered kiss after kiss upon them. The strength and tenacity of her affection touched him to the quick. This time she resisted, and her resistance

only inspired additional ardour. He forgot the ties that bound her, and that she was the property of another. Heroes and heroines are generally depicted as more or less perfect beings. Harry and Annie were intensely human, and therefore, full of faults. They were neither wholly good, nor yet wholly bad, but a mixture of both, and the reader must take his chance of being disgusted by their folly and their errors, which are plainly set forth with no attempt at concealment.

She tried to repel him, but only in a faint-hearted manner. He put her resolution to too sore a test. His eye fascinated her. It is a terrible thing for a woman, when she is the slave of a man who has no right to be her master. It puts her in an extremely difficult and delicate position. Love takes up the cudgels on the one side, conscience on the other, and between them she knows no peace.

Gradually, but surely, he drew her towards him, and once more stooped his lips to hers, and again she yielded to the embrace, thinking, "It is the last time, the last, last time." How often have those words been a cloak for sin.

Then, on a sudden, a great dread almost silenced the beatings of their hearts; for there—pallid with passion, his countenance distorted, and his eyes shining like those of a wild beast, stood—Mr. Thompson!

A horrible pause ensued, which seemed to last an eternity. At length he spoke a single word.

That word was—"Villain!"

The next moment, with a strength no one could have guessed him capable of, he seized Harry by the throat, and held him in a grip of iron. Annie uttered a sharp cry, then stood as if petrified. She felt that life could contain no more bitter and humiliating moment. In it, she emptied the cup of anguish to the very dregs, and before her eyes, like a hideous dream, flashed the long, painful future.

Ebenezer's small form seemed to have acquired a borrowed dignity. After a while, he flung Harry from him, and hissed rather than said. "There! you dog, you are not worth killing, or I would do so. This, then, is the manner in which you take advantage of my absence. It only proves how correct were my suspicions. And you, madam," turning to his unfortunate wife. "What have you to say for yourself?"

Very little. How could she under the circumstances, and in the situation in which she had been surprised. It was useless appealing to his generosity, or attempting to proclaim



her innocence. He had not sympathy enough with human nature to forgive her for liking another man better than himself, or to see that she was to be pitied rather than scolded. In these matters, strong personal feeling always prevents a kindly, or even a fair, judgment. The sinner deserves castigation. Consequently she gets it ; but she receives not only her righteous punishment, but also a great deal more than she merits. The plea of extenuating circumstances is not considered.

Annie made no endeavour to defend herself, neither did Harry. The culprits hung their heads guiltily, whilst honour, shame, which for a few moments had died within their breasts, once more sprang into life.

Ebenezer saw his advantage, and was not slow to push it to a merciless end ; moreover he was too heated by passion to deliberate on the language he employed.

"You are no gentleman, Mr. Hopperton," he continued, in accents shrill with excitement. "No gentleman, I repeat, and I tell you so to your face. If you were, you would not try to corrupt another man's wife behind his back. It was a most fortunate stroke of luck, my receiving a second telegram from Mr. Smith, which was handed to me on board, at the second station from here, and thus enabled me to return at once by the mountain road. Ha, ha, Annie, it turned out most convenient your telling me of the route, for had it not been for that useful piece of information, I should have been far away, whilst you were doing your billing and cooing, instead of arriving just in time to witness the grand finale. Oh ! you wicked, degraded pair !"

Annie winced at these concluding words, but Harry, when he heard them, held up his head, and into his pale face the rich blood flamed in one bright wave of colour.

"Silence, Mr. Thompson," he said, in a low but steady voice. "You have said enough, and more than enough, and if you have one spark of right feeling or chivalry in your composition you will spare your wife further reproaches. She does not deserve them. I alone am to blame. Against her better judgment, I persuaded her to come out with me to-night. You may call me bad and degraded if you like. I don't defend my conduct in any way, but I do hers, and she is a good, pure-minded woman, who is far truer to you than you give her credit for being. Such women seldom go wrong. They have too much pride and self-respect, and their love is not so much a

thing of the flesh as of the spirit. On my word of honour as a gentleman—though I need not swear by that, since you tell me I have forfeited the name—your wife has done nothing to injure her fair fame.”

Harry was no coward, and after the first shock occasioned by Mr. Thompson's appearance and the rough handling he had received, all his energies were bent on defending Annie. She realized this, and glanced at him with shining eyes, whilst her heart all at once seem to grow too big for her body. She had never loved him as at this moment, when he sought to shield her at his own expense. And indeed, whatever his faults, he looked a right goodly young fellow, as he stood up straight and strong, and to outward appearances calm, before his infuriated opponent. Even a wrong cause could not succeed in making him appear mean.

But the consciousness of Harry's superior physical attractions, only increased Ebenezer's wrath. He felt that if he had possessed them, his wife might not have remained indifferent to his fascinations. Although he never owned to it, he was keenly alive to his deficient power of pleasing the fair sex. Annie was not the first woman to whom he had proposed and been refused. He hated tall, good-looking men instinctively, and looked upon them as his natural enemies.

“You young puppy,” he cried, still beside himself with rage. “I should like to shake the very life out of you. Don't stand there staring at me. I'll knock you down if you do.”

But in spite of his words, he made no attempt to put the threat into execution, probably because he felt he could not fulfil it, and failure would only prove ignominious.

Harry confronted Mr. Thompson in so dignified an attitude, that it seemed to deprive the latter of any temporary advantage he had gained. Ebenezer glared at him in silent hatred for a few moments. He began to entertain an uneasy consciousness that he was not making the most of the situation.

“I feel I owe you every apology, Mr. Thompson,” said Harry, reddening up to the roots of his hair. “I have behaved like a blackguard, and I admit it. All I can say in my own self-defence is, that the wrong done you was not premeditated, and in bidding good-bye to Mrs. Thompson, perhaps for ever, I succumbed to temptation. Once more I humbly beg your pardon.”

But Ebenezer was not to be thus appeased, though he felt it might be better to cut the interview short. He had a good

word of honour as that, since you tell us done nothing to pretext for doing so, since the rain, which had long threatened, now began to descend in great soaking drops which fell to the earth like pellets.

"D——n you," he said in reply, and then he rudely grasped his wife by the hand, and dragged her away.

That was the last she ever saw of Harry Hopperton, standing tall and erect against the midnight sky, with the white waterfall glancing beneath him. Henceforth their paths lay asunder, and would cross each other no more; and so ended Harry's first serious flirtation with a married woman. It had gone a little too far to be pleasant, and there and then he resolved never to have another. He was aghast at the consequences, and ashamed to think of what Annie would suffer through his instrumentality.

At half-past three a.m. the carriage in which Mr. Thompson had driven back to Sandéthal, returned over the mountains from whence it had come, conveying the bride and bridegroom. The bride looked pale and her eyes red with weeping. None could tell what she had endured during the couple of hours when, shut up in her own room, under her husband's eye, she packed up her trunk and made every preparation for departure. She came forth a sadder, if a wiser, woman, from whom the spring of youth had gone for ever. Darkness enshrouded her now; in the years to come it might give place to twilight, but never again would the bright, sunny day break for Annie. The gay tints had gone from her life, and only the sober ones remained.

In the grey, early morning, with the rain descending in torrents, and the mountains all swathed in mist and hidden from view, husband and wife commenced their journey, the fond pair who only a few short weeks ago, had been securely linked together for the remainder of their days. They did not speak much. She sat and saw the last of Sandéthal, where she had been so happy, and also so very, very miserable, but it needed not that final look. The place was photographed upon her memory.

How wise is the dispensation which, in the midst of our most moving tragedies, introduces some comic element. Just as the carriage was about to disappear it was pursued by Margrete. Her wild gesticulations made the travellers think that they must have forgotten something. They bade the driver stop. Then into the hands of each, Margrete thrust a highly glazed card, on which was printed in large letters, "Margrete

B. Langesaeth, Sandéthal," surmounted by an ornamental device, representing a heart transfixed by an anchor and a sword. Even Annie could not help smiling at this artless piece of vanity on the part of the homely hand-maiden, but alas ! there was little probability of her requiring her services again. She turned the card over, to examine it more closely, and started ; for in Harry's hand-writing, she read the following words hastily scribbled, " Good-bye ! If ever you want a friend, come to me." She held her dripping umbrella close round her, so that Ebenezer should not see the tears that coursed down her face.

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## CHAPTER XXVII.

### CATCHING A POACHER.

AFTER watching Mr. and Mrs. Thompson depart through his bed-room window, Harry tumbled into bed. He felt very miserable, and also very much ashamed of himself, when he reflected that he had been the means of placing in Ebenezer's hands, a sharp instrument of torture which he could, and probably *would*, use against his poor little wife every minute of the day. He was not one to let bygones be bygones, and Annie was bound to suffer terribly.

Realizing this, Harry felt positive that he should not succeed in obtaining a wink of sleep ; but the many hours of casting and active exercise had fatigued him. The night was now far advanced, and, in spite of his mental distress, before long he was surprised to find himself dozing off and a friendly oblivion stealing over his senses, which rapidly blotted out all painful recollections.

When he woke up it was past eight o'clock, and he had to think before remembering what the disagreeable incident was, that had happened over-night. Then it all flashed back upon him, like a moral douche of ice-cold water, and he jumped out of bed as fast as he could. The rain was literally sheeting down, and as he looked out of the window, he could hardly believe the sad and dreary valley to be the same beautiful spot that had so frequently delighted his eyes of late, by its exquisite tints and marvellous purity of colouring. Now, the well-known landmarks were blurred and indistinct, if not completely swept from vision. A dense, white mist shrouded Fjord, mountains

and river. The presence of the hills could only be dimly guessed, thanks to the darker grey which distinguished them from water and from sky, and the key-note of colour was everywhere identical—dull, gloomy, and monotonous.

In fact, nothing could possibly have been more depressing than the immediate prospect. The rain beat against the window-panes in furious gusts, and trickled down them in little rivulets, whilst the ground all round the house was ornamented with muddy puddles, occasioned by the great drops that came drip, drip, dripping from the roof. To recognise the place was really difficult, so different did it look under these altered conditions. One thing was clear. Until the rain abated, it was useless to think of fishing, therefore, feeling uncommonly low-spirited, Harry descended to the sitting-room.

When he sat down to his solitary breakfast in the solitary parlour, then, for the first time, he fully realized the blank caused by Annie's absence. He missed the shy, loving glances from her dark eyes, which had been wont to greet him on his entry, also the timid hand-shake and the sound of her soft voice inquiring after his health. Oh! what a brute he had been!

Here was he, melancholy certainly, and a prey to a regular fit of the blues, but comparatively peaceful, and with no one to nag at him from morning till night, whilst she, poor, dear soul, had to bear the whole brunt of the battle, and submit to all Ebenezer's sneers and insults. He could imagine that she would have a bad time of it in the next few days, and the thought oppressed him sorely.

For himself, although lonely, and to use a slang expression—down in the mouth—in some ways he was astonished to find the departure of his friends a relief. He breathed more freely, for, to tell the truth, during the last week the situation had been too strained to be pleasant. Ebenezer's absence was a distinct gain, but he had grown used to Annie's little pretty feminine ways, and the house no longer seemed the same without her. A lump rose in his throat, when Margrete appeared about eleven o'clock, bearing a large basket containing the linen, Annie had sent to the wash, and about which the discussion had arisen. She had had to leave it after all. He was quite affected as he gazed at the starched collars and neatly-folded handkerchiefs, and felt convinced he should never, never get over his grief. It would make him wretched for the rest of his life and rob existence of its honey.



Thus the greater portion of the morning passed away. He was far too depressed and miserable to settle to anything, and found even the task of writing a few business letters more than he could manage. Altogether poor Harry was certain that he was in a very bad way.

By and by he heard Jens' voice talking to Margrete in the kitchen, and then he roused himself sufficiently to call out and ask him to come into the sitting-room. In answer to this invitation, Jens appeared at the threshold and stood there, felt wide-awake in hand, with the big rain-drops running down his great, good-natured, fresh-coloured face, and his hair all moist and lank.

"Well?" inquired Harry, with more interest than might have been expected from one so entirely under the influence of that mischievous god—Cupid, "how's the river?"

"Mounting op very quick," came the reply. "To-morrow vi skal 'ave grand Elv. One man stand dere by de bridge, and 'ee zee mange, mange stor lax waiting to come op. Dat first ting dis morning. Dose fish, dey all can get over Fos now."

"Ha! that's good news," exclaimed Harry, in quite an animated tone, beginning to throw off his dejection. "First-rate news, Jens. But how about to-day? Can we fish?"

"Ah! no zo well. Elv very big, and de water—it no clean. To-morrow vi skal catch mange salmon, but to-day not god. Fish always take best after rain; yust when Elv begin to go down."

"Bother!" exclaimed Harry disconsolately, thinking what horrible thoughts would pursue him if he remained idle all day, and that, in his love-sick state, fresh air and exercise were absolutely indispensable. "Will nothing take, Jens, do you suppose?"

Thus appealed to, Jens deliberately surveyed the sky. The outlook was still far from promising, but a slight break in the clouds afforded reasonable hope that the rain was about to moderate.

"Yes," he said, "perhaps de zea-trout may take in Fos pool. No chance oder places; but vi vil try. No do, not try."

One great, good point about Jens was, that he never threw cold water on the desires of his employer, but, on the contrary, always tried in every possible way to promote them. Some gillies grow lazy and indifferent, and look down with contempt on small fish, but although Jens liked a big one better than a little one, he was just as keen now, as on the first day he ever

handled a gaff, and never threw away a chance, however slight, of making a good basket. Among his many estimable qualities, this was one of the most invaluable. About half-an-hour afterwards, he and Harry, clad in waterproofs, and stout leather boots that reached up to their knees, splashed their way through the wet grass and spongy moss down to the "Fos" pool.

No doubt this spot would have given rise to some very harassing memories had it worn the same aspect as when he last saw it, but really the river was no longer recognisable. Thanks to the violence of the rain, in a few hours it had risen wonderfully, and was now a raging torrent that came tumbling down in one impetuous mass of foam. Already, the big stones beneath the "fos" were covered, or nearly so, and many familiar landmarks were completely hidden.

The water was not exactly dirty, in our English sense of the word, owing to the clean and rocky nature of the river-bed, and to the glaciers from which it was fed; nevertheless, it was decidedly discoloured, and the fall instead of being spotlessly white as heretofore, was now a pale cream colour, which, however, in no way detracted from its beauty. The noise that it made was almost deafening, and resembled the continuous booming of great guns, whilst the spray flew up like fountains, high into the air.

As Harry stood, and gazed in astonishment at the marvellous transformation which had taken place since he and Annie had wished each other good-bye on the evening before, he was suddenly roused by a cry from Jens of "Zeal, zeal." He glanced in the direction indicated, and, sure enough, saw the troubled waters below the "fos" part for a moment, whilst out came the round, dark, shiny head of one of those destructive fishermen, who, doubtless, had swum in with the tide, in order to enjoy a little quiet fishing on his own account. Evidently he regarded the "fos" pool as a sort of private pleasure-ground, wherein he could disport himself amongst the sulky salmon to his heart's content and take his lordly fill.

Unfortunately for him, Harry did not view matters exactly in the same light.

As the seal bobbed up and down, fishing as well as any old angler, and quite as bent on slaughter, Jens declared that it would never do for them to stand tamely by, and see one of their best pools poached in this effective and barefaced fashion.

"Very bad ting," he explained to Harry. "Frighten all de stor lax away. No do; ve must kill him." And he showed his strong yellow teeth in quite a vindictive manner.

"But how can we kill him, Jens? It's not so easy. The brute is so infernally active."

"Don't know yet; but ve vil wait and zee. Most likely 'ee get tired by and by, and take one rest."

So they selected a couple of flat stones—the ground was sopping wet—and sat down patiently, to watch the movements of the intruder, who had acted on the selfish principle of "First come, first served." Fully a quarter of an hour elapsed, and still the seal pursued his avocation with unabated vigour, but little by little he began to grow fatigued by swimming up and down, backwards and forwards, round and round in the strong current, which tore from one descent to another at racing pace, and made it a wonder how any living thing could contend against it. Now, on the left side of the pool—that on which Harry and Jens were seated—was a round black rock, worn perfectly smooth by the action of the water. It protruded about a couple of feet. All the other rocks were already covered, so rapidly had the river risen.

Presently the seal tried to clamber on to its slippery surface, which afforded the only convenient resting-place within reach. Jens put his fingers to his lips as a warning signal, and he and his companion remained perfectly motionless. So quiet were they, that the seal seemed quite unconscious his movements were being watched by two pairs of sharp human eyes. At all events he took no notice of their steady gaze. Once, twice, thrice, he fell back into the surging waves which ran up the sides of the boulder like hungry living things. The fourth time he succeeded and slowly dragged his fat, sleek body on to the wet stone. It was just large enough to allow of his stretching out his limbs, or rather fins, at full length, and he lay there looking the picture of content, blinking his eyes with an expression of lazy good-humour as the rain-drops fell upon them and trickled down his cheeks.

"Oh, for a gun." This thought flashed simultaneously through the minds of both spectators, as they beheld what a tempting shot he presented. The sight, indeed, was more than Jens could withstand. He seized the gaff, crept noiselessly down the bank, sheltering himself behind every friendly bush and stone, then suddenly rushed into the water past his

waist, and reaching forward as far as he could, with one quick stroke of his long arm made a lunge at the disappearing seal, whose fears had been aroused just half a second too soon. It was a gallant attempt. Jens only missed him by the eighth of an inch, but he was nearly carried off his feet by the raging stream, and retired to the bank disappointed, and considerably wetter than when he left it. He seemed almost like an amphibious animal, judging from the fearless way he splashed in on every occasion.

Fortunately his slow, tenacious mind, when once thoroughly roused, was not to be discomfited by trifles, and he now bethought himself of an ancient peasant who lived in a hut, perched high up amongst the rocks on the opposite side of the river. This individual being a great hunter, and having, according to report, actually in former days killed a "ryper" (ptarmigan) flying, possessed a rusty old brass-bound, wooden weapon which he dignified with the name of rifle.

Struck by this happy thought, Jens marched off, crossed the bridge higher up, and went in search of him. Dietrich Landmark was at home, and willingly lent the antiquated fire-arm, which he viewed with such pride and fond affection; but a slight difficulty arose. He had no bullets ready, and was under the necessity of retiring to his back premises in order to forge a couple. This operation took a considerable time, and Harry began to grow tired of waiting, and to wonder what Jens could be about. At length, however, he reappeared, shouldering the loaded rifle in triumph, and followed by the venerable Dietrich, whose interest in all sporting matters was still keen. Meantime the seal, after the fright he had received, seemed permanently to have quitted the rock and recommenced fishing.

For the best part of an hour, he kept up a most exasperating game of hide and seek, now popping up quite close to his foes, as if they were on the most friendly terms; then diving, and in an incredibly short space of time appearing fifty yards and more, away. There was no chance of getting a shot at him. He took provokingly good care of that.

At length, when the patience of the watchers was rapidly becoming exhausted, he once more approached the rock. It was an anxious moment. Their hopes and fears were about equally balanced. Would he or would he not rest on it again?

Yes. He tries to scramble up as before, fails—for his strength is somewhat exhausted, but finally succeeds. Now is

the opportunity. Harry, not knowing the capabilities of the strange old flint-lock, motions to Jens to fire. The latter creeps stealthily forwards among the low juniper bushes that line the bank, making as little noise as possible, and proceeding with the caution of a Red Indian. Thank goodness, the seal lies motionless. He is evidently fatigued by his recent exertions, and suspects no danger.

A breathless pause ensues. Then—ping goes the bullet as it whistles through the air and wakes every echo within twenty miles, rumbling like thunder among the mountains.

"By Jove! he has missed him. No, he hasn't. Bravo, bravo!" cries Harry, starting to his feet in frantic excitement, as the poor seal tumbles sideways with a dull thud into the river, and there lies struggling. Jens drags him to the bank, and gives him his *coup de grâce*. In another minute the water for yards around, is dyed red with his blood, as it oozes out from the deep gash across his throat, inflicted by Jens' sharp blade. The active creature, whose movements they have so long and so curiously watched, now lies dead at their feet, a soft and shapeless mass of sodden flesh. He has caught his last fish and will never more disturb the "fos" pool. The transition from perfect health to sudden death seemed awfully sudden. It was impossible not to feel sorry for the poor seal whose adventurous spirit had caused his undoing. Harry, whose heart was very tender, had many compunctions as he gazed at him, or rather her, for she proved to be an expectant mother; but Jens was jubilant, and declared that she was a good riddance, as she would have completely ruined the pool had she been allowed to make it her headquarters for any length of time. Dietrich was presented with the carcase in compensation for the use of his rifle, and he was delighted with this reward, although the skin would not fetch more than a krone or two. But money goes a long way in Norway, and people visiting that country for the first time, are surprised to find how happy and well-off folk can be, when their wants are few and their tastes simple. It teaches them that the English, as a race, are far too luxurious, and that love of eating, love of drinking, of pleasure and personal comfort, is rapidly producing deterioration of the entire nation.

After this adventure was over, Harry fished on steadily until the day began to draw to a close. The result was again disappointing, although, for once, the fish had a legitimate excuse, the state of the water quite accounting for their sulki-



capabilities of the fire. The latter niper bushes that le, and proceed- ank goodness, the ed by his recent

goes the bullet as cho within twenty untains.

he hasn't. Bravo, rantic excitement, ull thud into the him to the bank, er minute the water d, as it oozes out cted by Jens' sharp nents they have so ead at their feet, a He has caught his e "fos" pool. The eath seemed awfully rry for the poor seal s undoing. Harry, mpunctions as he d to be an expectant are that she was a etely ruined the pool eadquarters for any with the carcase in nd he was delighted not fetch more than way in Norway, and time, are surprised to when their wants are hem that the English, love of eating, love of ort, is rapidly produc-

ry fished on steadily The result was again fish had a legitimate untung for their sulki-

ness. Two rash brown trout, and one small sea-trout about a pound and three-quarters in weight, constituted the bag. Jens' hopes, however, were extremely high. He foretold brilliant sport after the heavy rain, and appeared so confident, that his expectations proved communicative. In fact, Harry grew quite cheerful, anticipating the morrow's doings, and began to believe that even in Annie Thompson's absence, life might still prove bearable, and contain a few pleasurable elements.

Anyhow, the incident of the seal, combined with the fresh air, the cool rain trickling down his face, and the fascinating pursuit of casting, did much to dissipate his sorrows. Under their influence his spirits quite revived and he felt more like himself again.

As they trudged home, horribly wet but wholesomely hungry, they were treated to one of the fine atmospheric effects for which Norway is celebrated. Towards sunset the rain ceased and the mist rolled away, leaving all the heavens dark and stormy, with great heaped-up masses of blue-black cloud, except just in the west where shone a long rent of fiery flame. The mountains stood out dark as night in silhouette, casting their sable reflections on the Fjord beneath, whose polished surface was smooth as glass and scarce disturbed by a single ripple. But farther from the land, the glory of the sky caught the quiet water, and with burning kisses made it gleam like molten ore, until the contrast between that one narrow shaft of brilliant light, and the intense surrounding gloom was truly magnificent.

But even as they looked, the clouds kept moving on, and closed in around the tongue of flame that made their blackness a thousand times more black, and with the last ray of red, the earth seemed to have had an extinguisher put upon her, and became cold and drear and colourless.

Then Harry sighed and felt sentimental, and thought of Annie. Nevertheless he managed to eat a most excellent dinner, and spent the evening in looking out all the very strongest tackle he possessed, in anticipation of the monster salmon that was sure to meet with his death next day.

He smoked a pipe, and went to bed early, in order to make amends for the previous night, and although no doubt he will go down in the estimation of all romantic people, he slept like a top, and Margrete, in the loft overhead, could hear his peaceful snores next morning at five o'clock when she arose as usual.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

"STOR LAX, STOR LAX!"

THE following morning Harry was up betimes, and the first look out of the window enabled him to see that the day promised well and was likely to prove a propitious one. A considerable quantity of rain had fallen during the night, but the weather, though dull and with a cloudy sky was now fine, whilst a gentle breeze from the south-west blew just strongly enough to make the birch leaves show their silver-grey linings.

Shortly after breakfast, Jens appeared and reported that although the river was still very high, it would in all probability begin to go down by the afternoon, in which case some capital sport might confidently be expected. He therefore proposed that they should make an early start, take their luncheon with them, and fish all the upper pools first, leaving the lower water until the afternoon, when according to present appearances the conditions ought to be extremely favourable.

To this proposition Harry readily assented. Consequently a little after ten o'clock they started in the "Stolkjærre." Arrived at their destination no time was lost in commencing proceedings. Jens examined the colour of the water, then looked at its height and finally selected a large Popham, quite an inch and a half in length.

"Dis very god fly for to-day," he said. "Water dark. Lax like bright fly."

By eleven o'clock Harry was hard at work casting, with an energy and eagerness, the result of re-awakened hope. Before long he felt a welcome tug, and had the intense gratification of looking upon that sight so dear to a fisherman's heart, namely, a bending rod and a vanishing reel. But the fish, though active, was evidently not the ardently desired "stor lax." He spun the line out merrily, and darted here and there in most vivacious fashion, but he did not hang heavy enough on the arms for a prize of great value.

"What is he, Jens?" asked Harry doubtfully.

"Grilse, I tink," responded that worthy, "but no quite zure. May-be Lax örret" (sea-trout).

Whatever he was, he dashed off again, making another spirited run right across the pool, and Harry, who had not caught a decent sized fish for many days past, was in an ecstasy

of delight, and like most novices, purposely prolonged the pleasure of playing him, although Jens, who stood ready, gaff in hand, several times uttered an impatient, "Now den, now den." But Harry was not to be hurried, and let the fish play about until he was thoroughly exhausted. It did not occur to him that every minute increased the chance of losing the captive, or that if their piscatorial majesties happened to be in a really taking humour, time was of the utmost consequence. At last Jens was forced to represent the matter in a serious light.

Meanwhile the fish, unable to struggle any more, turned on his side, and lay white and glistening on the top of the water, with his red gills heaving convulsively.

Harry had not had much practice in mooring tolerably good fish in to the bank, and he bungled a great deal, but Jens came to the rescue as usual. He was a splendid fellow, and an invaluable assistant, and never seemed to mind getting wet one bit. His clothes and boots he treated with supreme disdain. He would rush in almost up to his waist after a miserable one pound trout if he thought there was any likelihood of losing him, and he now darted into the stream so far, that his leather Wellingtons were inundated. With unerring aim he drove the gaff through the silvery sides of the fish. Out spurted a stream of blood that showed vividly red against his white belly, and the next moment he was gasping on the bank.

He proved to be a fine grilse, weighing seven pounds and a half, and fresh run up from the sea. He gave a few spasmodic struggles as the unwelcome air came gurgling into his lungs, and then Jens took up a big stone and knocked him on the head once or twice which soon put him out of his misery. His tail curled up and almost met his wide-open mouth, and after that it unrolled itself slowly, and he lay quite straight and still on the bright, fresh grass, with harebells and buttercups lending their beauty to his death-bed.

He was a remarkably handsome fish, perfect in shape; small-headed, fat-bodied, and well-coloured; and the sea-lice were still on him, proving how recent had been his arrival from the ocean. Jens was almost as pleased as Harry, prophesying a first-rate day's sport, and he strongly advised his employer to keep the grilse for his own eating.

"'Ee very god," he assured him. "No 'ard, no dry. All de gentlemens who come 'ere dey like de grilse."

The pool having been disturbed they now went to another.

Several of them were still very high, and one or two were almost unfishable, nevertheless, they contrived to pick up a couple of fine sea-trout before luncheon, weighing respectively four and a half and six pounds. They should have had another and larger fish, but Harry lost him, owing, it must be confessed, to his clumsy handling. Angling is by no means as easy an art as it appears to the uninitiated onlooker, who has no notion of the skill and dexterity required, and it cannot be learnt all of a sudden, even by the most promising pupil. Harry had made fair progress since his first arrival at Sandéthal, but of course he had yet much to learn, and could not be expected to gain experience without making a few mistakes.

About two o'clock they sat them down under a birch tree, whose silvery bark had all been peeled off by the natives, to lay on their cottage roofs as a foundation for the thatch, and whose poor, bare stem looked red and bleeding. They leant their backs against the sloping bank, ate their luncheon, and afterwards smoked their pipes, looking out with dreamy content at the great, grey mountains opposite, standing up grim and gaunt in their stony desolation, that to-day was unrelieved by any ray of sunshine. Harry watched with interest the numbers of little, white waterfalls which, since the rain, seemed suddenly to have sprung into life. They came foaming down, now fluttering aloft like slender pennants, anon leaping into, and losing themselves in some dark chasm, again re-appearing, and winding their way downwards like so many strands of silver thread parted and divided. The sheep and cattle bells tinkled high overhead. Grand masses of cloud sailed sombrely by, pausing to rest occasionally on the cold crests and glaciers which impeded their free passage, and in rivalry claimed a portion of the sky. A lean, rough-coated dog came and looked at the anglers with trustful eyes, which like some poor, but honest mendicant mutely begged for alms in the shape of a piece of bread. From a hazel bush hard by chattered the ubiquitous magpie, whilst a light-hearted blackbird piped melodious response to his harsh notes. And the river gurgled and splashed and murmured, like a thing instinct with life; not life boisterous and painful, but soothing and harmonious.

An inexpressible peace and restfulness hovered over the whole scene. Harry as he contemplated it felt sweet, calming influences descending upon his spirit. The whole effect of this simple, outdoor existence, spent amidst the most glorious

and elevating surroundings, was curiously tranquilizing, and he asked himself with wonder whether it were really he, who but so short a time since had been a prey to such unreasoning passion, as almost to master every sense of honour. It seemed impossible, and he blushed when he recalled the past. It represented a black page stored away in the tablets of his memory, to which he could not turn without a shudder.

But they must not sit there meditating and smoking, when for the first time for a whole fortnight, they were favoured by a really good fishing day. Another fortnight might elapse before they had such another, and the most ought therefore to be made of it.

Consequently, when over half-an-hour had gone by, Harry gave the signal to re-commence business. Once or twice during the forenoon, the sun had endeavoured to struggle out, but now the clouds were closing up, and the afternoon was beautifully dark, without, however, being stormy. They went straight to the "Ned fos" pool, having fished the "Opper fos" in the morning. This was a strong and rapid reach of the river, almost straight, and about a hundred yards in length. The current here ran very fast, and being deep as well, it was much frequented by big fish, Mr. Smutch, during his first visit, having caught a thirty-pounder in it. Jens, after deliberations sufficient to have settled the whole of the Irish Question, finally decided to change the Popham and put on a Butcher in its place. He averred that in this particular pool the latter fly proved very killing. Harry was, of course, as obedient as a child in his hands, and stood contentedly by whilst the alteration was being effected. In his innermost mind, he had a fixed belief that one fly was much the same as another, and that sport depended far more on the inclinations of the fish, than on the difference between a few red and yellow feathers. But this heretical opinion he did not venture to propound. At last, when everything was complete, he dropped his mighty Butcher into the rushing water with all the skill of which he was capable.

As a rule, it was necessary to put on waders, in order to fish the "Ned fos" properly, but to-day, the river being high, they were not required, since only the sides of the pool were in good order, and not the centre.

"Now then, Jens, for a thumping salmon," said Harry, cheerfully. "I would give twenty pounds to catch one."

The words were hardly out of his mouth when suddenly, an



enormous boil in the water covered it with widening ripples, which even the stream could not carry away all at once.

"Dere 'ee is, dere 'ee is!" exclaimed Jens, in low tones of intense excitement. "I tought 'ee would show 'imself before long. Big lax dat."

"Yes, but I have not got him. He never took hold, worse luck, and may not come again.

"Vait bit. Don't be in a hast (hurry). Leave off casting, and give him one rest."

To Harry, this advice sounded most curious. Having risen a fish, it was with the greatest difficulty that he could refrain from throwing over him immediately. The inclination to do so was enormous. But Jens sternly set his face against this proceeding, and declared that, nine times out of ten, it destroyed all chance of success. He now insisted upon Harry's retreating from the bank, sitting down, and waiting five whole minutes.

At last he told him he might begin casting again, but advised him to commence considerably above the spot where the salmon had risen, so as to let the fly drop gently down with the current.

Harry, inwardly, rather pooh-poohed these tactics, but the good of them was soon apparent, and patience had its reward, for now, at the second time of asking, the monster rolled lazily up again from the bottom, and executed a complete somersault beneath the surface of the water, just showing the tip of a tail that looked a foot and more in breadth. The next minute he dived down, with the hook firmly imbedded in his gristly jaws, intending to return to his accustomed snug hole beneath the bank.

Whereupon Harry uttered a yell of triumph, whilst even the sober Jens brandished the gaff aloft, and waved it in sympathetic pride. The sight of a salmon put fresh life into him.

"Stor lax, stor lax!" he cried. "Tirty, forty pounder."

But Harry was not in a condition to make any reply, for the fish, directly he found himself restrained in a novel and wholly disagreeable fashion, made one mad rush down the stream. Whirr went the reel, whilst the line ran out with lightning-like rapidity. Eighty, ninety a hundred yards go, in half the number of seconds. Harry has but thirty yards left him, and feels as powerless as an infant. He tries to wind up, but the strain is so great, he is afraid of breaking his rod or his tackle. He loses all control over the fish.

"Run, run!" shouts Jens. "Follow 'im down de river, if you can't prevent 'is leaving de pool."

And run Harry did, as if for his life, closely followed by his trusty attendant. Over stones, and boulders, through bogs and ditches, now tearing past overhanging trees that slapped their faces mercilessly, anon tumbling into the ice-cold water, bruising their shins, and scratching their hands, on, on they sped, and on sped the salmon also. Once Harry fell head over heels over a log of wood lying concealed amongst some bramble bushes. Fortunately he did not part company with his rod, and held on to it like grim death. His arms were aching, his muscles quivering. The excitement and the fatigue were intense. He could not have believed that a fish could pull so hard, or be so heavy.

By the end of a mile they were clean beat. Jens' breathing in the rear, sounded like that of a broken-winded horse, whilst Harry's heart thumped against his ribs as if it would break through them altogether. What a size the salmon must be! Will he *never* stop, or does he mean to take them right down to the sea?

At last, thank goodness! when they are both completely spent, and feel as if they could not run another yard to save their lives, the fish, to their inexpressible relief, comes to a sudden halt.

"Vind op—vind op," gasps Jens, as coherently as his inflated lungs will permit of, and Harry begins turning the handle of his reel with feverish haste. It is an immense satisfaction to regain some portion of the line. It puts him on better terms, and relieves that odious feeling of helplessness. He only succeeds, however, in recovering about one-third, when he is stopped by a sullen, dead weight that entirely checks the action of the reel. The monster has now taken to sulking, passing from one extreme to another, and this fresh phase of resistance is almost as wearying as the more active. It puts such a tension on the arms and back. Ten minutes go by, twenty, thirty, and the "Stor Lax" refuses to budge an inch, hanging upon the rod like a lump of lead. At length, Jens grows desperate, and commences throwing stones into the river.

Of the first and second he takes no notice. He treats them with dignified contempt, but the third apparently goes nearer the mark, or else rouses his temper, for suddenly he turns, and races back to the "Ned fos" almost as fast as he left it.

Panting, gasping, stumbling, they follow him anew. Re-

turned to his old haunts, he vouchsafes them but a short breathing space. Up goes his tail, and down goes his nose, as giving a series of powerful jerks, he endeavours by sheer weight to break the line that impedes his movements.

Oh! ever blessed Marana! Who would not at such a moment willingly pay eight or even twelve shillings a cast for thee. Thou art worth thy weight in gold. Harry forgot his bill, and heaped grateful thanks on the head of Mr. Farlow. The tackle held good. Neither knot nor gut gave way under the tremendous strain put upon them. The fish apparently realizes that he must try other tactics.

Up the stream, and down the stream he tears, growing more and more infuriated, but visibly feeble. One moment he dashes across to the opposite bank—the next, he comes straight at you like a bull. Once, and once only, he leaps right out of the water, and reveals his huge proportions. No common salmon this, but a giant amongst his race, and possessing a courage that evokes admiration, whilst, at the same time, putting his enemies on their mettle. A gallant fellow, who sells his life dearly, and contests every inch.

He almost deserves to escape—almost, but not quite. The disappointment would be too cruel. He has one or two chances. Over and over again the line falls slack, when he makes some unexpected run towards the bank, and his antagonist cannot reel in fast enough, but he is too firmly hooked to get rid of the sharp barb that binds him captive. Even though he tries to rub it out against a stone, he fails in the attempt. It is a splendid fight. As the minutes go by, and still the monster yields not, it threatens to become an agonizing one. The perspiration literally runs down Harry's brow. His hair is limp and wet, his cheeks feel as if they were on fire. He clenches his teeth, and holds the rod in a vice-like grasp. It is difficult to keep it from slipping, and he is losing his head a little; the contest is so prolonged and so unexpectedly severe. A whole hour elapses. It is but a repetition of what has gone before—runs, jerks, digs and sulks on the part of the salmon; labour, heat, and anxiety, merging pleasure in pain, on that of the biped.

Jens looks on with breathless interest, but beyond an occasional word of necessary advice, says little. He knows that in a crisis like the present, a man must act for himself, and according to the best of his ability. Interference only confuses him and distracts his attention.

As the fish begins to hang out signals of distress, Jens creeps noiselessly down the side of the bank, and with watchful eye following every movement, stalks him craftily and warily. Up till this, he has not had a single opportunity of securing the prize. The "Stor Lax" fights strong and well, but his strength is failing him now. His runs are shorter, and a longer interval takes place between them.

At length, blinded by rage, and perhaps despair, he darts towards the very bank on which his foes are standing. A portion of his great, black body becomes visible, looking like a submerged log. In an instant Jens leaps waist high into the water, and by a magnificent piece of gaffing, drives the gaff right into him, just as he is disappearing.

Hurrah! hurrah! Slowly but surely—he is far too heavy to lift like an ordinary salmon—he drags him in towards the shore. He is in shallow water now, another moment he will be safe, when—oh, horror, the gaff/snaps in two and the steel-pointed hook parts company from the wooden handle. What is to be done?

An agonizing moment ensues. The salmon, though sorely wounded, and with the barb still in his back, begins to recover. He flaps his mighty tail, gasps, opens and shuts his red gills, and slowly rolls from one side on to his stomach. He wriggles forward a few inches, and gets into deeper water. A second effort takes him still further. The cool refreshing stream once more trickles around him, with its re-vivifying current. He glides onward, keeping his nose towards it. Another minute and he will be gone.

"Oh! Jens, Jens," shouts Harry, beside himself with vexation. "Don't lose him, for goodness' sake don't lose him. It would be too cruel."

Jens does not utter a word. He is pale with emotion. He unsheaths his big knife, and with a tiger-like spring, bounds breast high into the current. If he drowns for it, he will have that salmon.

If Harry is keen, he is doubly, trebly so, for though not responsible for the accident, he feels his reputation is at stake. For a second the cold blade gleams above his head, the next it is imbedded deep in the salmon's flesh, and the red blood spurts from his side.

That well-judged stroke decides the issue, and secures one of the finest fish ever caught by rod in the Sandéthal river.

Bravo! Bravo! Such a splendid specimen was worth

waiting for, and the concentrated enjoyment of that rapturous moment will never be forgotten. Harry lays down his split cane, and stretches out a helping hand to Jens, who threatens to be swept off his feet. The gallant Norseman seizes it gladly and is dragged to the bank, bearing the impaled fish after him.

And now they can see his full size. What a monster he is to be sure! A black, hoary, old Patriarch, who must have come up from the sea months ago. An ugly fish to look at, with his great head, and long, lanky body, but a trophy all the same, for he weighs no less than thirty-seven pounds and three-quarters. Harry's arms are still quivering from the prolonged tension, but his delight is unbounded.

He takes out his flask and conscientiously divides the contents. He entertains for his companion an unlimited admiration, added to an almost brotherly affection. He would have liked to reward Jens' services by a present of money, but the gillie's peculiar delicacy of character renders this a difficult matter. He considers the ten kroners already received quite sufficient guerdon, and refuses the bank-note which Harry tries to force on his acceptance.

True nobility! There are not many men in a humble position who would decline a similar offering. Jens would have nothing to say to the crisp paper. He rejected it politely but firmly. He accepted a pipe of English tobacco, however, with great readiness, and Harry inwardly resolved to send to England for three or four pounds of the best Bird's-eye, as a slight token of his gratitude and esteem.

How proud he was! how happy and triumphant, as he recorded the events of the day in his fishing book, and wrote to Mr. Smutch to inform him of his success. He could even think of Annie with feelings far less acute. Indeed, he realized that it was better fun catching thirty-seven pound salmon than making love to another man's wife, besides being ever so much wholesomer, and leading to no unpleasant consequences. This was poor love, possibly, but it was sound philosophy.

What would Annie, sitting pressing her hot eyes against the window-panes of a little room in a remote Norwegian village, have said, could she have seen the man who, only a few hours ago, vowed she was his, and proposed flying to the Antipodes with her, consoling himself so exceedingly well in her absence? Would she have nodded her head resignedly, and said, "Ah, well! it's only the way of the world, and of men in particular!" or would she have esteemed his affection as a



poor, light thing in comparison with her own? Perhaps it *was* a poor light thing, and yet his conduct, viewed impartially, was natural, and to be expected from the difference of sex.

There's the pity. One gives so much, such a wealth of passionate feeling, the other so little. One treats with vital gravity what the other regards as a temporary *divertissement*. And the moral? Why, the moral is this. It is useless to look for perfection in human beings. Such a thing exists not. They wound you and disappoint you all through life, but if you make up your mind to be wounded and disappointed as a matter of course, you will learn toleration, and get to regard your fellow-creatures, not so much as independent agents, free from every hereditary taint, but as actors, whose parts are assigned to them, even before their birth, and who, for good or ill, must play them to the end. Then you will feel as sorry for their faults as you do for your own, recognizing that they, like yourself, are only automatic figures pulled by invisible ropes, held in the broad hand of the Almighty. Moreover, all the passions by which the poor human puppets are agitated count for very little in the long run. The mountains, the rivers, the skies, these things last, according to our mortal computation, but our own lives do not. They are liable to be cut short at any moment, and, even at the best, are soon forgotten. Comfort ye, then, Oh! fond and weeping women, whose tender hearts are often so cruelly lacerated, for whether a man's affection survives for a day, a month, a year, it all comes to the same thing in the end.

It is better to be brave, and live nobly, to do your duty, and feel the spirit within you growing stronger and clearer, than it is to fall down and worship before some false masculine idol, who for your gold gives copper.

Real love is beautiful, for real love endures, but it is, alas! exceedingly rare, and the mock sentiment which takes its place now-a-days is as hateful as it is mischievous.

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## CHAPTER XXIX.

### A FAIR ANGLER.

THE following morning was very bright, and although the river was now in excellent order, Jens considered it wiser to

wait a little after breakfast, on the chance of some clouds getting up.

Harry had no objection to this arrangement, and rather approved of it than otherwise. He had hauled his big salmon up from the cellar, where it had been deposited over night, laid it out full length on the porch, and was engaged in taking an accurate paper copy on two old sheets of *The Times* pasted together. But not content with this, he set to work to perpetuate the "stor lax's" huge proportions, by painting them on the wooden bench that ran round the sides of the porch.

Jens was perfectly enchanted, having never seen anything of the kind attempted previously, and he stood by, watching the proceedings with absorbing interest, and occasionally making some valuable suggestion.

Harry possessed a natural talent for drawing, and soon sketched the fish in with a broad, firm charcoal outline. But when he came to the painting, he found it much more difficult than he had anticipated to catch the exact tints. They were either too grey or too black, and it seemed an almost impossible task to accurately represent the peculiar silvery sheen of a salmon's body. Even though dimmed by death and a night among the blue-bottles, chinese white refused to give the transparent effect, or to indicate the marvellous delicacy, with which one pearly scale fitted over the other, growing smaller and smaller, until they faded away altogether in the yellowish-creamy skin of the belly.

However, by dint of taking a good deal of trouble, he managed to make a fairly successful job on the whole, and the fame of his performance spreading by degrees, nearly all Sandéthal assembled around him. Margrete left her work, and stood staring with arms a-kimbo, and broad, smiling countenance; Herr Christian came too, discoursing gravely and learnedly, as he gazed, on English and Norwegian politics. The store-keeper ran out from his shop, though that was a matter of little consequence, since customers were not frequent; two venerable crones followed in his footsteps, wearing flat white caps that formed a most becoming head-gear, and nearly a dozen wide-eyed children shyly advanced to have a look at the "Engelskmand's" drawing, so that altogether there was quite a gathering. And a very innocent, simple one it was, too, easily pleased and diverted by the merest trifles, from which a more civilised and luxurious race

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would have failed to derive the least amusement. As the salmon grew and grew, the spectators became more and more admiring, and Jens was forced to tell the story of its capture, and his own exploits in particular, a great deal oftener than his modesty approved of; but Harry kept chiming in, in broken Norsk, and insisted on every detail being recounted without a slur or abbreviation. Thus the morning passed, and, occupied and interested, he worked on till about one o'clock. Then paints and brushes were hurriedly put away, for Jens descried some filmy white clouds, rising like a veil of lawn from the horizon, whose intense blue they softened, but could not dim, and he predicted that before long, the sun's dazzlingly bright rays would be quenched, and they should lose no more time in glorifying dead salmon when live ones were to be obtained. Accordingly, Margrete was sent bustling off to get dinner ready immediately, and preparations for an early start were at once commenced, reels, wound up, &c.

This time, Jens proposed to fish the lower pools first, working their way up-stream, and then fishing them again in the evening, by which plan they would have a double chance in the best water.

They therefore reversed the usual order, and commenced operations at the "Fos" pool. It was in the pink of condition, clearer and slightly lower than on the previous day, but yet nearly a foot and a half higher than it had been for a long time past. Ten minutes had scarcely elapsed, before Harry hooked a fish. He was a strong, determined fellow, and after one resolute run down stream, he made boldly for the fall, apparently intending to leap its frothy heights. He gained the whirlpool, steering straight across its dangerous eddies, and swam steadily on until he reached the seething cauldron of tumbled foam immediately beneath the "Fos." A more undesirable spot in which to play a fish could not have been conceived, and the rapidity of the current intensified the difficulty.

Harry tried several times to check him, but without success. Although by no means so heavy a fish as his capture of the previous afternoon, this was evidently a fine salmon, excessively active, and weighing as far as they could judge, not far short of twenty pounds. In spite of every effort to prevent him, he now made straight for a big stone, and ran round and round it with horrible cunning. The line grew tauter and

tauter, the strain momentarily increased, until it became evident that either the salmon or the tackle must give way. A few anxious seconds ensued, then—up flew the point of the rod, and all sense of resistance ceased. A terrible feeling of blank disgust swept through the angler's frame. It is not easy to describe the exact sensation, or the void that it produces. If you stood on a high hill, and were suddenly thrown down to the bottom, and were told you had to climb that hill all over again from the beginning, you might perhaps understand something of it. When the fish waves his tail in your face, and leaves you powerless to pursue him, it is the most disappointing and weariful moment in existence. Nothing quite equals it for badness. Harry stood perfectly motionless, with half-closed eyes and lengthened jaw, too sick at heart to speak.

And Jens respected his silence, and did not utter a word either. Indeed, he was as disappointed as his master.

At length, when he seemed fully to have realised the extent of the calamity, Harry turned round and said to his attendant: "Dash it all, Jens, he has gone."

The observation was quite unnecessary, since Jens was already aware of the fact, but it afforded some outlet to his lacerated feelings.

"'Daarlig lykke' (bad luck), 'meget daarlig' (very bad luck)," responded that individual in a subdued voice. "'Ee was one god fish dat. Lit lax never try yump op fos."

"I say, Jens, it wasn't my fault, was it?" inquired Harry anxiously.

"No, nobody fault. Could not be 'elped."

This assurance was consolatory to the defeated angler, and gave him fortitude to reel in and examine his tackle.

Once more had the good Marana stood the test, and although a little frayed where it had come in contact with the stone, its knots were all perfect; but the tag had gone, and with it, one of Mr. Farlow's finest and largest sized Jock Scotts, price three-and-sixpence.

Harry felt very despondent and low spirited. This was his first experience of losing a big fish, and custom had not as yet softened the blow. Jens tried to comfort him by declaring that the very best fishermen were often equally unfortunate, and that you might consider yourself extremely lucky if you succeeded in landing every other salmon hooked. Harry's fly-book was now appealed to, and in five minutes the disaster was repaired, and everything put in working order.

again. Jens shouldered the rod and they walked on to the Bridge pool, so named from an old wooden bridge that crossed the river just below it. And here, to his unutterable surprise, Harry saw an apparition.

On the opposite bank he saw a young lady fishing—at least, he imagined she must be young, from the slim outline of her figure, defined against the blue back-ground of hill and sky, for the ultramarine tints were unusually strong to-day, and shed an exquisite haze even over the bald mountains. But the river being wide at this point, he was too far off to see her very distinctly. His astonishment was perhaps increased, because, up till now, he had imagined he possessed the sole right of fishing in the Sandéthal waters, and he felt a little indignant at the cool way in which his property was being infringed upon; more especially as the young lady, whoever she might be, had hooked a salmon, and was in the act of battling with him, much to the glee of a small boy in attendance, who danced about like a veritable imp of mischief. The spectacle was unexpected, and not altogether pleasant.

Nevertheless, in spite of his annoyance, Harry found it impossible to abstain from watching the contest. The next best thing to catching a salmon yourself, is seeing somebody else do so; and as he gazed, he unconsciously learnt a good deal from the quiet and skilful way in which the fair unknown handled her rod. There was no symptom of bustle or excitement; every movement was workman-like, and proclaimed her an adept at the game. And when once or twice she had occasion to raise her arms, thereby displaying an exceedingly pretty waist, his wrath gradually cooled, and its place was taken by a strong inclination to see what sort of a face the owner of so well-proportioned a waist possessed. For he felt morally convinced that it must be beautiful, and he ardently wished he were a little longer-sighted, so as to turn surmise into certainty. Unfortunately, the sun had burst out with redoubled power, and, moreover, was right in his eyes, and as she was standing with her back to the light, it was impossible to make out her features. They were represented by one dark blur. Feeling provoked both by her presence and by his inability to discover whether she were young and pretty, or young and ugly, Harry turned to Jens for information.

"Who is that lady over the way?" he asked abruptly.

A smile of pride illumined Jens' countenance. Evidently they were old acquaintances.



"Dat Fröken (Miss) Velsine," he responded, in a tone which seemed to say that, of course, everybody must know who Fröken Velsine was. But the intelligence conveyed nothing to Harry's mind. He still remained in a state of Egyptian darkness.

"Oh, indeed! And pray, who is this said Fröken Velsine, and what business has she fishing my pools?"

"She is our Landsmand's daughter, and she can fish where she like. All Elv hers."

"The devil it is! Then it strikes me it's not much good my stopping here."

"Mr. Smutch," continued Jens gravely, "no could buy up de right of Herr Velsine. Velsine 'ee no will sell."

"Why not? Did he offer too few kroner?"

"I tink Herr Velsine no motch like Mr. Smutch; besides," and his face brightened, and he cast an affectionate glance towards the further bank, "de Fröken, she very god fly-fisher. Like very motch catch lax."

"So it appears," said Harry grimly. He was by no means satisfied with this explanation, and wondered why Mr. Smutch had never told him the real state of affairs. "I suppose we may as well go home," he added, after a slight pause. "No doubt the young lady has already fished all the upper pools."

"Dis zide ours, dat zide 'ers," said Jens. "When Fröken Velsine not out, den we can fish bode zides. To-day only one; but no signify. Plenty of water in Elv for you and 'er."

At this juncture a cry of disappointment from the lady opposite attracted their attention. Precisely as her youthful attendant was making a series of unsuccessful endeavours to gaff the fish, the latter gave a spasmodic leap out of the water, caught the line with his tail, and broke it. Harry had so recently been subjected to a similar disappointment that he could not help sympathizing. A few minutes now elapsed, during which the fair one inspected the extent of the damage. Apparently, it was greater than she could repair, for she began waving her pocket-handkerchief, whilst a clear cry of "Jens! Jens!" came ringing across the water.

Jens' face lit up at the sound with a smile quite affectionate in its nature. Anybody could see that she was an immense favourite of his, and that she inspired the profoundest admiration.

"De Fröken is calling me. May I go?" he said, appealing to Harry for permission. "No stay vay very long."

"Stay as long as you like," responded the young man, flinging himself down on the grass. "It don't make a bit of difference now the pool has been messed about in this manner. I shan't attempt to fish it."

They were not very courteous words, but he looked upon his day's work as spoilt, and was thoroughly put out, whilst he felt hot with indignation against Mr. Smutch, who, he was rapidly learning, had deceived him in so many things. For during sundry conversations with Jens he had contrived to ascertain that Ebor's friend was a myth, and that Ebor himself was the lessee of the Sandéthäl river, for which he paid the sum of fifty pounds yearly.

Consequently, when Harry recalled the cheque for five hundred, he knew quite well that he had been done. Possibly he might have forgiven this had the means employed been more straightforward and honourable, but his sense of rectitude was offended by the petty deceit which Mr. Smutch had practised. And now, the discovery that Herr Velsine possessed the right of fishing one half the river, came as a fresh blow on the top of a good many already received. True, it did not so much matter on a day like the present, when all the water was in good order, but as soon as the river went down again, it would be very awkward to arrive at a pool and find Miss Velsine already in possession. He wondered what the deuce ladies wanted to fish for. It was natural enough for men to have the slaying instinct, but for women to nourish it was both horrible and unfeminine.

It did away with all the charm supposed to be owned by the weaker sex, when they placed themselves on an equality with the Lords of Creation, and aped not only their manners and their clothes, but also their very pursuits. Altogether Harry felt anything but amiably disposed towards the fair angler. If his thoughts could have been read, he wished her at the bottom of the sea.

Thus thinking, he turned round on his elbows and gazed moodily down at the soft cushion of velvety moss beneath him. Perhaps it was this attitude which prevented him from hearing footsteps and seeing two figures advancing over the creaking timbers of the bridge. He was startled out of his sombre meditations by the sound of Jens' voice saying, in its deep, bass tones:

"Mr. 'Opperton, Fröken Velsine, she desire to speak one word wid you."

He jumped up hastily, and there and then any animosity he might have entertained against the young lady vanished once and for ever. The mere sight of her was sufficient to disarm wrath, for she was the most infinitely fair thing he had ever set eyes on. Her hair was that peculiar colour which can only be described as whitey-gold. It was very thick and long, and simply dressed in two big shining plaits that hung down her back, and almost reached the ground. Her eyes were as blue and pure as her native skies, and in their clear depths was mirrored an adorable expression of candid innocence such as one sees in the eyes of a quite young child. A lake without a single ripple, was not more calm, more gloriously serene, than they. The brows and lashes were light, but of a darker shade than the hair. The nose was straight and delicate, and the rosy mouth small and full of little pearly teeth. So white, so fair, so virginal was she, in her chaste, young beauty, that had it not been for the fresh, healthy tints of her complexion, an indifferent observer might have accused her looks of insipidity. But the snowy skin, with its apple-blossom bloom, bright yet at the same time marvellously transparent, refuted this charge.

For the rest, she was tall and slim, upright as a young willow, with small hands and feet and rounded limbs. She had none of her country-women's breadth of back, squareness of shoulder, or width of hip, and as she stood there, dressed in a short serge skirt, a blue and white striped body, gathered in at the waist by a band of blue ribbon, and a straw sailor hat on her little stag-like head, Harry felt completely overpowered by the sudden appearance of so lovely a creature.

He forgot his manners, and could do nothing but stare at her, just as if he had been some uncultured plough-boy. Somehow she gave him the same sort of feeling as did the land of her birth, for he could see by the fair hair and blue eyes, the straight features and proud bearing, that she had Vikings' blood in her veins.

Like the great grey mountains, the green Fjord, and rushing waters, she conveyed a sense of unutterable repose. Those turquoise eyes of hers were so placid, so tranquil, and seemed to look out on the world with such infantine simplicity, and such a supreme unconsciousness of their own beauty. An ice-maiden, cold and pure as the snows that towered above her flaxen head.

But no! Under the influence of Harry's prolonged gaze—too earnest to be polite—the warm blood mounts to her cheek,

and dyes it rosy red, like the sun's after-glow that catches the far off peaks, and kisses them into life. And then, when the sweet, vivid blush fades away, she speaks, addressing him in excellent English, that is almost completely free from any foreign accent.

"Mr. Hopperton," she says, recovering the graceful self-possession which seems natural to her, "I come to you a beggar, since I come to ask a favour."

No address could possibly have charmed Harry more. His disapprobation of female anglers faded from his memory, as she stood before him, leaning slightly against her rod, whose butt rested on the ground.

"You have only to name your wish," he said gallantly. "It will be a pleasure to me to grant it."

Who would have recognised the young man who, only five minutes ago, was growling and grumbling on the bank? Oh, beauty, thou givest to woman a power which neither wit nor intellect can equal. For men judge by the eye, and by the eye and the senses they are ruled. Not one in a hundred cares for learning in comparison with looks.

"I have lost my salmon," said Miss Velsine regretfully—she might be a goddess in appearance, but she was none the less a keen sportswoman—"but alas! that is not all. He took the last casting line I possess in the world. My father has sent to Bergèn for some more, but they have not come yet, and—and——" Here she hesitated.

"And you would like to go on fishing, and want me to give you one, eh?" said Harry, with an encouraging smile.

She drew herself up proudly.

"No, not give—lend. I will pay you back as soon as my own casting lines arrive. I am not in the habit of asking for gifts."

"I beg pardon," returned Harry, feeling that the friendly tone adopted towards Mrs. Thompson was not quite suitable in Fröken Velsine's case. "Let me see what sort of a line you have been fishing with," and he examined it carefully. "Rubbishy thing," he exclaimed contemptuously, winding it round his finger, and breaking it with the greatest ease. "Why! it's not fit to hold a trout with. No wonder you lost your fish."

"The gut is not good, I know, but we have great difficulty in obtaining it here. Last year, Mr. Smutch gave me some before he went away, but I have used it all up."

"Oh! so you know Mr. Smutch!" ejaculated Harry,

marvelling why his friend Ebor had not mentioned the existence of this young divinity.

"Yes, a little."

"And you like him?" It was one of those impulsive questions which Harry was in the habit of blurting out on the spur of the moment, and without due consideration.

An uncertain expression passed over Fröken Velsine's fair face, and her eyes narrowed.

"It was very kind of him to give me his casting lines. I ought to like him, but," and her voice dropped. "I don't think I do—much."

Harry forbore from any further inquiries. His curiosity was roused, but he could see by her manner that she disliked the subject, and that it proved embarrassing. Was it possible she was in love with Ebor, and sought to conceal the sentiment? A pang shot through his heart. He did not somehow think Mr. Smutch would make her a very good husband. He was of opinion there were others who might make her a better. Mindful meantime, of the young lady's request, he produced his fly-book, and brought out two stout, treble-twisted lines.

"Here, take these," he said. "They will do to go on with, at any rate."

What miracles a good pair of eyes can achieve! He was actually supplying her with tackle wherewith to fish *his* pools!

"Thank you very much," she said, with grave simplicity. Then, taking up the book—"May I look at it?"

"Most certainly. There is no need to ask permission."

She turned the pages one by one, looking at them with the greatest interest.

"Pophams, Butchers, Claret Jays, Dusty Millers, Silver Wilkinsons and Jock Scotts," she said, with a smile. "I see you have plenty of good flies wherewith to snare our Norwegian salmon."

"How do you come to know the names of them all?" inquired Harry, struck by the profundity of her knowledge.

She laughed, and her laugh was as sweet and clear as one of the sheep bells on her father's hills.

"For a very simple reason, Mr. Hopperton. Because I tie flies myself."

"You?—impossible!"

"I do though, don't I, Jens? And catch fish with them, too, what's more."

Jens, thus appealed to, grinned from ear to ear.



"Quite true," he said. "No fly take so many lax in dis Elv, as Fröken Andrine's fly."

Her name was Andrine then. Harry thought it a very pretty one, which exactly suited her style of beauty.

"Let me give you a home-made salmon-catcher in return for your kindness." And drawing forth an old leather pocket-book, she presented him with a specimen.

It was a beautifully made fly, and had a light-blue silk body, striped with silver tinsel, and a neutral-coloured wing, in which strips of bustard and mallard largely predominated. Harry possessed none quite of the same pattern.

"It is a curious thing what a partiality fish show for that sky-blue body, wherever there is snow water," observed Andrine. "I have noticed it many times. This is another favourite pattern," showing him a fly with a yellow wool head.

"How clever you are," he exclaimed admiringly.

Her brow contracted ever so slightly. She was not used to compliments, and they disturbed her serenity.

"No, I am not. I only wish I were. My father is very clever, but I am stupid."

"I can't believe that, Miss Velsine. Anyhow, I for one would give anything to be able to make flies so well."

"Would you really?" And her face kindled.

"Yes, really."

"Then," she said with the utmost simplicity, "I will teach you, although I don't pretend to be a professor."

Harry's pulses thrilled with expectant pleasure. He could imagine how delightful the lesson would prove with such a teacher. He could hardly take his eyes off her, and this rudeness on his part was rendered the easier, because of her absolute unconsciousness and freedom from all coquetry.

"I should like it awfully," he said eagerly. "But how did you learn in this out of the way part?"

"An old fisherman taught me, one Öla Erichson by name. He had been over to your country with some great English lord, who took a fancy to him. He also showed me how to fish, for" with a little air of pride, "very few Norwegian ladies can throw a fly."

"Are you Norwegian or English?" asked Harry. "I have been wondering all the time."

She smiled.

"I am half and half. My mother is an Englishwoman, and from her I learnt to speak your language. My father is de-

scended from the Old Vikings. He is a Landsmand here, and everybody knows him except you, and you, Mr. Hopperton," casting a reproachful glance at her companion, "have never come to see him."

"Indeed," he responded, confusedly. "I did not know where you lived."

"You have passed the house very often. It is the one near the 'Fos' pool, with roses growing up the porch, and cabbages in the garden. We are proud of our cabbages, because nobody else has any, though I admit they are not beautiful."

"I remember now. I have noticed them often, and wondered who they belonged to."

"My mother will be very glad to give you some," said Andrine, with the hospitality characteristic of her race. "But I should like you to come and see her, because she so loves hearing news of her own country. We are always at home on Sunday afternoon, for Elizabetha goes to church, and mother and I cook the pandekages, and get father's dinner ready."

The directness and simplicity of this speech quite won Harry's heart. Andrine was totally unlike any other woman he had ever known. Small as was his experience, they all appeared to him to be self-conscious, and striving after effect. Even Annie Thompson fully appreciated her own good looks, and was not above practising certain little tricks of fascination. He did not object to them, but for all that, they still remained tricks, and were a trifle artificial.

But here was one, a hundred thousand times more highly gifted personally, yet as innocent and straightforward as a child. Her inexperience wrapped her round like a shield. His man's honour told him it would be a base, mean thing to strive to take advantage of it. She was a veritable flower of nature, and the gallantries which had been, in a measure, permissible in Mrs. Thompson's case, would be wickedly out of place here. In this secluded valley, girt round by mountains, the foul breath of the world had not yet reached her. She had escaped its taint, and, like the wild animals who have never seen man, and, therefore, will confidently approach him, she knew and suspected no danger.

Adorable ignorance! Alas! that it should ever be dispelled!

"I will certainly come and see your mother on Sunday, if I may," said Harry, adopting the same frank tone as employed by Fröken Velsine.

"That's right," she replied. "We can settle then about

beginning the lessons. And now I must be off, or the fish may give up rising. Good-bye, Mr. Hopperton, and good luck to you." So saying, she waved her little hand in a friendly fashion, and retraced her footsteps over the bridge by which she had come. Harry's ill-humour had entirely vanished.

He no longer minded another person sharing his right in the river, and he fished away at the Bridge pool, casting over the identical spot again and again, as long as Andrine Velsine was visible on the opposite bank. Jens appeared highly gratified by the impression she had so evidently produced.

"What do you tink of our fisher lady?" he inquired with irrepressible curiosity.

"She is beautiful—quite beautiful!" said Harry, not attempting to conceal his admiration.

Jens nodded his big head approvingly.

"Ah!" he said, drawing a long breath. "She is god too, is our Fröken Velsine, and dat is better dan being pretty. All de poor peoples love 'er."

Harry made no reply, but he thought in his own mind that it was impossible for any one to help doing so.

Only he wondered uneasily if this young ice-maiden, with the beautiful blue eyes and the white-gold hair, and the fair pink and white complexion, would ever love anybody in return. She seemed too pure and cold for Cupid's fiery dart to destroy her serenity and dissipate its virgin snows.

As she disappeared from vision he pondered over whether it could be done. His heart beat fast at the mere thought of human passion lighting up that still and beautiful face.

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## CHAPTER XXX.

### NORWEGIAN HOSPITALITY.

SPORT continued good throughout the week, and when Sunday arrived Harry was in the highest of spirits. During the last two or three days Annie Thompson's image had rapidly faded from his mind, and since the meeting with Andrine, he felt quite prepared to set up a new idol in its place.

Do not be too hard upon him. If there were but one pretty woman in the world, men might possibly prove constant; but there are so many, and because they admire the rose it does not

follow that they should not equally admire the jasmine, the lily of the valley, and a host of other sweet and fragrant flowers. Perhaps, on the whole, women would fare worse if they didn't. At any rate, fewer get left out in the cold altogether, and the male admiration—that precious thing—is more evenly distributed.

Our hero dressed himself with extra care. For the first time since he had left Bergen, he put on a stiff white collar, whose unyielding texture confined his throat well up to the chin, causing him to carry it quite an inch higher than usual. A neat checked suit and a light-brown pot hat completed his attire, and when all his preparations were at an end, he could not help looking with some satisfaction at his tall and upright figure in the bit of cracked looking-glass that did duty as a mirror.

It would have been difficult to analyze his thoughts at this precise moment. They were a confused *pot-pourri* of many ingredients. Nevertheless, it flashed across his mind, as he stood there putting a few finishing touches to his toilet, that fair women invariably fall in love with dark men; and he wished to goodness he had raven locks and a heavy, drooping moustache like Mr. Smutch, instead of possessing hair which, in strict candour, could only be called sandy, and an upper lip adorned by a little insignificant fringe of tow-coloured down, calculated to give him a disgustingly youthful appearance.

However, he had not made himself, so these things could not be helped, and he went forth to fascinate and to conquer, if not a veritable Apollo, at all events, a fair, fresh, well-looking young man.

It blew half a gale and the Fjord, some distance from its head, was covered with white sea-horses, that kept tumbling and breaking, leaping and splashing as the wind came in fitful flurries. The sun shone brightly at intervals, sometimes hiding behind a heavy cloud, sending dark streamers flying across the blue rents of far-off sky, and causing deep purple shadows to trail along the valley and the mountain sides, then as it flashed out suddenly, lighting up the whole scene with a searching glory of gold. The effect was both wild and picturesque, and lent an additional grandeur to the landscape.

Harry walked along the one solitary road possessed by Sandéthel, and which led in the direction of the "Fos" pool. The air was sweet after the rain, and fragrant with the odour of wild flowers and moist herbage. He met many peasants on

the way, all of them dressed in their Sunday clothes, the men wearing suits of shining black broadcloth, the women their smartest petticoats and gayest handkerchiefs. Scarce a single person omitted the usual smiling salutation and its accompanying "god-dag!" (good-day). When one looked at the poverty of the land and compared the natives with Irish peasantry, it was impossible to help admiring their industry and perseverance. Many a cottage was perched high up on the very slope of a moraine, with miniature fields of rye and wheat flourishing around, which, by incessant toil, had been reclaimed from a perfect wilderness of stone.

A quarter of an hour's steady walking brought Harry to the Landsmand's house. It was finely situated on a rising knoll, with a background of straight-stemmed pines, and overlooked both the river and the more distant Fjord, but, like the cottages of the poorer class, it was built entirely of wood. The exterior had been painted a creamy yellow, picked out with bands of brown, and the red roof was of a charmingly mellow hue, delightful to the eye when contrasted with the sombre green crowns of the fir trees. The tiles of which it was composed were free from that fiery and aggressive tint so common in our English ones; they were subdued in tone, and, moreover, ornamented by patches of yellow moss and greenish-grey lichen. The porch was quite an elaborate edifice, and occupied the entire centre of the house, mounting to the upper storey, and forming a handsome balcony, round which ran some well-turned wooden railings.

A magnificent Gloire de Dijon rose climbed up this elegant structure and almost covered it with its fragrant bloom. The ground at the base of the knoll was strewn with thickly lying boulders, but a portion of it had been cleared and converted into a small garden, in which, besides the afore-mentioned cabbages, flourished a row of currant and gooseberry bushes, an old apple tree, some carrots, turnips and potatoes, and a few sweet peas, the whole being enclosed by a low hedge of briony. A small gate, painted green, led upward, from the road. Through this, Harry passed, and walked along the neatly kept path.

The door of the house stood wide open—thieves and burglars were evidently unknown—and he was just debating whether to knock in orthodox fashion, or boldly enter, when Andrine herself appeared, running out from an adjoining room to greet him.



"Here you are," she exclaimed, holding out both her hands in friendly welcome. "I saw you some way off, and you have come in the nick of time, for father and mother are just taking their afternoon coffee."

So saying, after passing through a little square hall, hung with coats and waterproofs, she ushered him into a large, airy apartment. It was spotlessly clean, three big windows draped with white muslin curtains, were adorned by numberless flowers, and a small square of carpet, partly hid the painted grey boards. Harry took a rapid survey. It was easy to see from the disposition of the various knick-knacks, vases, books, photographs, &c., that feminine fingers had been at work, for the room, though bare and unfurnished according to his insular notions, still possessed a thoroughly homely and comfortable appearance. Its lightness, freshness and cheerfulness were striking.

Herr and Frue Velsine were seated at a centre table, sipping hot coffee, whose delicious aroma at once assailed Harry's nostrils. They greeted him with a warmth and cordiality that soon dissipated any predisposition to shyness on his part, and in five minutes he found himself thoroughly at home, and drinking his coffee just like one of the family. He glanced at Frue Velsine curiously. A man always feels interested in the mother of the girl he admires, if only because he expects to see what she will develop into. But in this case he was disappointed. He could not imagine any number of years producing the smallest similarity between Andrine and her mother. They were totally unlike.

Frue Velsine was neither poetical, ideal, nor Madonna-looking. She could not possibly have been mistaken for an iceberg or an ice-maiden, or anything in fact but a stout, motherly English woman, whose rosy cheeks, bright eyes, dark hair, and pleasant face proclaimed her nationality. Her daughter possessed no points of resemblance, and it was clear that she inherited her good looks entirely from the parental side. Herr Velsine was of the pure fair Norse type, and an unusually fine man. He measured over six feet high, and his limbs were admirably proportioned. There was something peculiarly noble in the carriage of his head and throat. It gave to his whole bearing an air of freedom and independence. With his steadfast eye, thick flaxen hair, and tawny beard, he reminded Harry of a majestic lion. His manners were those of a courteous and polished gentleman, but as he could speak very little English,

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and as his guest was unable to carry on a fluent conversation in Norwegian, after the first civilities had been exchanged he pleaded business, and left the room.

Frue Velsine appeared enchanted to meet with a compatriot, and nothing was too good for Harry. With kindly hospitality which would not suffer itself to be denied, she brought forth of her best, making Andrine unlock the cupboard where the home-made cranberry jam was kept, and fetch from the kitchen a plate full of the most delicious rusks; and not satisfied with this she insisted on his tasting the national "Fladbrød," a thin, flat cake, resembling oatmeal, but having a sourish taste, and made of rye.

Andrine was kept running backwards and forwards, and she seemed to take as great a pleasure as did her mother in giving her visitor a warm reception. It was in vain Harry protested when she laid the table with a snowy cloth, removed the cups already used, and performed sundry little services, which he had hitherto seen relegated to a man-servant or a parlour-maid. On beholding her bear off the coffee-pot, and carry it into the kitchen to be replenished, he jumped up from his chair, with a feeling not unlike dismay that she should do anything half so menial—she who looked only meant to be worshipped.

But Andrine, if she appeared an ethereal being, was by no means one in reality, and she laughed heartily at the confusion this simple action so evidently excited, whilst Frue Velsine remarking it also, said:

"Ah! Mr. Hopperton, you are not used to seeing girls made useful, and busy themselves about a house. It is not the fashion in England, I know. They sit all day long with their hands before them, and think of nothing but frocks and admirers. Many of them hardly know how to order a dinner when they get married, and have not one practical idea in their heads. All that is the result of a false system of education, and an artificial state of society, which renders admiration the one goal of a woman's life. But here, in Norway it is different. The people are more simple-minded and contented, whilst their poverty, which exists even among those who occupy a good social position, compels them to wait upon themselves, instead of being mere puppets in the hands of a tribe of over-fed servants. Andrine has been brought up according to the customs of her father's country, but I hope you do not think any the worse of her, or deem her less a lady, because she knows how to make a bed, lay a table, and cook a dinner."

Harry cast an admiring glance at the girl. He highly approved of her household qualities—every woman ought to possess them who was worth anything; but all the same he could not help smiling at the thought of this adorable young creature bending over smoky fires, and dirtying her white hands by the lifting of smutty saucepans. Such an occupation seemed so wholly at variance with Andrine's delicate style of beauty, that, in spite of Frue Velsine's words, he doubted whether she were in earnest.

That lady's eyes were extremely sharp, and it did not take her long to detect the expression of incredulity which stole over his face. She therefore determined to convince him.

"Ah! Andrine!" she exclaimed, jestingly. "Mr. Hopperton is sceptical, and will not admit the superior merits of our Norwegian young ladies. Go out and cook him some *pandekages* (pancakes) at once, so that this unbelieving Thomas may be converted."

"Yes, mamma," said Andrine, with a playful smile, fully entering into the spirit of the thing. "I fly. In ten minutes from now, I promise that Mr. Hopperton shall have a dainty dish set before him, fit for a king."

And without giving Harry time to protest, she disappeared, leaving him perfectly aghast at the mere idea of her being called upon to handle a greasy frying-pan on his account. How would her complexion ever retain its purity, if subjected to the kitchen fire? It seemed positively inhuman to abuse beauty in such a ruthless fashion. If the family were so poor that she was forced to degrade herself to the level of a general servant, of course there was nothing more to be said, but she need not exert her household talents on his behalf. He had already partaken of coffee, cranberry jam, *fladbröd* and rusks, and could eat nothing more.

"Indeed, indeed, Frue Velsine," he exclaimed, in the greatest distress, "I cannot take *pandekages* at this hour of the day. Pray do not let your daughter trouble."

"It's no trouble, it's a pleasure," she laughed in return. "Besides, nobody knows what they can do till they try. And as for Andrine, you need not mind about her. She is not accustomed to be treated like a fine lady who has never done a stroke of honest work in her life. So don't distress yourself, please."

"But," murmured Harry, "she is so beautiful it seems a sacrilege."

The mother's face lit up with a smile of gratified pride.

"Yes," she said, "Andrine is beautiful. I won't deny it. She takes after her father, who twenty years ago, was said to be the handsomest man in Norway; but for all that there is no reason why she should be idle and useless. Some day, please God, she will marry a good Norsk husband, the same as I have done myself, and then it would be a pity if her ideas were too grand for her station. So many young women wreck their happiness on that account, and end by making themselves miserable, simply because they expect too much out of life, and instead of attending to the plain duties that lie straight before their eyes, if on'y they would see them, run after every kind of absurdity. I believe rather in doing what you can, than in pining for what you might like, but haven't got."

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### THE ICE-MAIDEN REFUSES TO FLIRT.

FRUE VELSINE was a very sensible, practical body, who entertained no exaggerated notions concerning her daughter's ultimate settlement. Her common sense was quite crushing. Harry could not find any suitable reply. Seeing him remain silent, she turned to him with a bright smile, and said confidentially—

"I can tell, Mr. Hopperton, that you are wondering at me—although you are too polite to state your thoughts—for having so little ambition, but the fact is my own life, since I married Herr Velsine, has been so happy, that I cannot wish my daughter better, than to follow her mother's example, and choose a husband from among the manly, simple, upright men of the Scandinavian land. I should be downright afraid to give her to some rich, fast young Englishman of the present day."

This sentiment by no means met with Harry's approval.

He was too well-bred to argue the point according to his inclinations; but he could not help thinking in his own mind, that it would be positively sinful for so beautiful a girl to remain shut up in a secluded valley all her days, and continue to live a humdrum, domestic life, only a few degrees superior to that of the peasants who surrounded her. She might just as

well have been a fright, if she was to waste her sweetness on the desert air, and let nobody profit by it.

He was too young, and as yet had not seen sufficient of the world to appreciate, at their full value, the inestimable blessings of peace, rest, and freedom from worry. He had had plenty of repose during his youth, sluggish, crawling repose, that sapped the very blood in his veins, but it had been of the wrong sort, and, at his age, he still possessed youth's natural craving for excitement. A pastoral existence spent amongst the beauties of Nature, with no society whatever, save that of one or two loved beings, did not at the present time sufficiently appeal to his imagination. He was not old enough to prize it at its true worth. But the hour would come, as it does to most of us, sooner or later, when the world's hollowness becomes daily more apparent, and we turn our unsatisfied hearts from luxury, frivolity, and self-indulgence to the universal mother, with her accompaniments of simplicity and restfulness.

"Don't you feel very dull here, sometimes?" Harry inquired, by way of giving a slight turn to the conversation.

"No, never," answered Frue Velsine, briskly. "I have my husband and my child, and always plenty to do. Depend upon it, work is the real secret of happiness, which should always be internal rather than external. When people are occupied, they have not time to think of their own sensations. It is only the idle ones who pity themselves."

"Quite true, but, all the same, the days must seem awfully long in winter, when it is dark at three or four o'clock."

"Well, Mr. Hopperton, and have you so very much more daylight in England? Come, be truthful."

"Perhaps not, if you live in London, and are favoured to many fogs. But then there are so many more amusements."

"Oh! we have amusements, too. We skate, ride, walk, and in the evening either knit or read. But, of course, I am willing to admit that the summer is our gayest time. It is not so quiet then. The steamboat calls once a week, in the height of the season sometimes twice, and every now and again tourists arrive, and take up their abode at Herr Christian's. They remind us that we are not quite barbarians." And she smiled brightly.

"Do you ever see anything of them?" asked Harry, wondering at her utter content, yet dimly perceiving she was more to be envied than he.

"Occasionally, when Herr Velsine's services may be required.



Then, too, it has become quite the fashion of late for your countrymen to bring their yachts into our Norwegian Fjords. So much so, that, two summers ago, we were favoured by a visit from a gentleman of the greatest distinction."

"Indeed, who was he?"

"No less a person than Mr. Gladstone, your 'grand, old man.' He was cruising about on a friend's yacht, and they put into Sandéthal, much to our excitement."

"And what did the 'grand, old man' think of the country?" inquired Harry, with interest.

"He professed himself delighted with it, and was wonderfully complimentary."

"You made his acquaintance then?"

"Yes, thanks to Andrine. He happened to see her on the pier, took a great fancy to her, asked who she was, and promptly introduced himself. They tell me he is very fond of pretty girls. Is that true, Mr. Hopperton?"

"I believe so, Frue Velsine. If not he has been sadly maligned by the great bulk of his countrymen."

"Well, anyhow, he struck up a sudden friendship with Andrine, and made himself so agreeable that we all fell in love with him. These great men can be very fascinating when they choose. The Sunday before he went away, he came up to say good-bye. He went all over the house, and inspected everything. What struck me most, was the number of questions he asked, and the interest he displayed in quite small matters. We have not many possessions of value, but we showed him those we had, and, amongst them, he particularly admired a very old and curious carved drinking bowl, made of wood, which, tradition says, has been in my husband's family ever since the time of the Vikings. Herr Velsine said nothing at the moment, but he is a very generous man, and when Mr. Gladstone left Sandéthal, he declared we ought to do honour to so distinguished a personage, and show the pleasure we had derived from his visit. So he caused the tankard that he prized as an heir-loom to be taken down to the yacht, with his compliments, and given to the famous statesman."

"And what did Mr. Gladstone give Herr Velsine in return?" asked Harry curiously.

A comical light twinkled in the lady's bright eyes. Evidently she was by no means deficient in humour.

"He gave many thanks, a photograph of himself, and an autograph letter. See, here they are," and she opened a

drawer of the table, and produced the articles in question for Harry's inspection. He looked at the rugged, noble old head, with its sunken eyes, intellectual brow, and deeply lined face, then he read the letter. It was very short, and contained only a few courteously worded sentences. It disappointed him a little, the tone was so formal and so studiously polite, as apparently it also did Frue Velsine, for she said regretfully :

"Ah! The tankard was a great beauty, and I wish you could have seen it. It used to stand over there," pointing to a table in the corner, "and its absence leaves quite a blank. I had grown to be so fond of the old thing. Herr Velsine, however, is content, and thinks a lot of this letter, but for my part I would rather have the drinking bowl back again."

Meanwhile, Harry was becoming exceedingly concerned at the prolonged disappearance of Andrine. He wished those "pandekages" at the bottom of the sea, for he had already paid an unconscionably long visit, and what with papa, mamma, coffee, and one thing and another, had seen next to nothing of the young lady. It was abominable that she should have been sent off to the kitchen to whip eggs, and toss batter, just when he wanted to seize every opportunity of getting on friendly terms.

"I'm afraid I shall have to be going soon," he said, beginning to fidget on his chair. "It's getting late."

"Nothing of the sort," rejoined Frue Velsine decidedly. "You know perfectly well that a Norwegian Sunday is not over until six o'clock, and that you can't decently go fishing till then. So make up your mind to be victimized, and stop where you are. I, for one, won't encourage you in scandalizing the simple natives by breaking the Sabbath."

"But I may be detaining you. You said a short while ago that you were always busy. You may have other occupations from which I am keeping you."

"Not a bit of it. In this good, old-fashioned country, when we say we are glad to receive a visitor we mean it. If you knew what a pleasure it is to me to see an English face, you would not want to go so soon."

"I don't want to go," said Harry, with perfect sincerity. His hostess's manner was so frank and hearty that he felt entirely reassured, and no longer fancied that he might be out-staying his welcome.

He began to realize that she was thoroughly genuine, and

he conferred pleasure by remaining. Afternoon calls in London, and afternoon calls in Norway, were evidently not exactly the same thing.

Shortly after this, Andrine reappeared, bearing a large dish of smoking pancakes, which she placed before her guest with a pretty little air of self-satisfaction. They were triumphs of the culinary art, and she had indeed cause to feel proud of them. Each one was no thicker than a sheet of paper, and delicately browned without being the least burnt. An epicure would have feasted his eyes upon them. They were not rolled up like English pancakes, but laid out quite flat on the plate, sprinkled with sugar, and placed one on the top of the other. Of course Harry declared his gratitude, but vowed he was not hungry, and could not eat a morsel; and equally of course, the ladies insisted that appetite or no appetite he must pronounce upon the dish. It ended by his demolishing more than half the "pandekages," much to Andrine's delight, who stood by with her innocent young face all wreathed in smiles, and looking prettier than ever, thanks to the bright colour her recent exertions had brought to her cheeks. He quite forgot he had arranged to meet Jens at half-past five, and walk up to the top pools, and he sat there chatting away to Andrine and her mother until the re-entry of Herr Velsine put him in mind of the flight of time. Then reluctantly he rose to go.

"Good-bye," he said. "I have paid you a regular visitation."

"Nonsense, Mr. Hopperton," returned the good-natured lady of the house. "For goodness' sake don't talk in that formal manner. You quite forget what a benefit you have conferred upon us. Now that you have once found your way here, I hope you will no longer stand on ceremony, but come as often as you like."

Harry's pulses thrilled with joy at this invitation.

"I most certainly will," he said emphatically, looking at Andrine in a manner which, for a moment, caused her to avert her eyes, "more especially as your daughter has been good enough to promise to give me some lessons in the difficult art of tying flies, in which she is quite an adept."

"Ah! that reminds me!" interposed the girl. "When are you going to begin?"

"Whenever you will let me. If the weather is bright, I seldom go fishing until the afternoon."

"Mamma, may Mr. Hopperton come to-morrow?" asked Andrine, turning to her mother. "Can you spare me?"

"Certainly, my dear, provided he has no better engagement."

Of course, Harry vowed he had none, and before the party broke up it was arranged he should take his first lesson on the following morning at eleven o'clock. Andrine looked upon the matter in quite a business-like way, and considered his desire to learn how to dress flies perfectly genuine. It never seemed to occur to her that she was the attraction, and this slightly damped his pleasure. The lessons, in his eyes, were only a means to an end.

"I shall look out all my silks and feathers this evening," she said, "and have everything ready by to-morrow morning, so as not to keep you waiting when you come."

"I shan't be in any particular hurry to begin," he rejoined, with a sentimental look. "Talking is nicer than working."

"Oh! we must not waste time. That would never do," she said, as seriously as a judge.

"I place myself entirely in your hands, Fröken Andrine. You have only to command for me to obey."

"You are talking like Mr. Smutch now. Talking nonsense." So saying she accompanied him to the garden gate, and undoing the latch, held it open for him to pass through. Her fair face was as calm and unruffled as if he had been a hundred, and the limpid blue eyes looked straight into his, with a grave and reproving expression.

"Did Mr. Smutch pay you compliments?" he asked, turning very red.

"I don't quite know what you mean by compliments. But he used to say things I did not like, and did not understand. My father overheard him once, and was very angry. He never would ask him to the house afterwards."

"And you say I talk like Mr. Smutch?"

"Not always, but you did just now, when you put on that funny look, and made a foolish speech."

"Then I never will again," said Harry, making a rash promise, which he knew would prove difficult to keep. Only, somehow, he had an intense dislike at that moment to being associated in her mind with his friend Ebor. As words were denied him, he thought he would try some other means of making himself agreeable, and at the same time of letting the warmth of his feelings be known. He took her hand in his,

to say good-bye again, and pressed it slightly. No maiden blush proclaimed her consciousness of his admiration, and for very shame he discontinued the pressure. Was this girl so innocent that she must actually be taught how to flirt. If so, she was indeed a *rara avis*.

Just then a brilliant glint of sunshine, gilded her white-gold hair, and formed a saint-like halo round it, lighting up the ivory polish of her cool, smooth brow. A feeling of despondency crept over him. How beautiful she was, but oh! how cold. No statue could possibly be colder. Would she ever wake up to human passion like Galatea?

A mad desire seized him to try the experiment. If only he had possessed Mr. Smutch's swarthy complexion and bold manners, and resembled an Italian brigand, then, perhaps, he might have had some chance of success. She was not to be won easily. Instinct told him that.

Something about this lovely maid rendered him curiously distrustful of his own power of pleasing. He felt shy and constrained in her presence, awkward as a schoolboy, and terribly afraid of giving offence. Those great blue eyes of hers, that were so like two still pools on a clear summer's day, possessed an unaccountable influence over him and reduced him almost to silence.

When he came to go over all the incidents of his visit, he was conscious of the fact that he had made himself much more agreeable to the mother than to the daughter.

The latter had addressed him very seldom, and, unlike a London young lady, had not made the smallest effort to force her attractions upon his attention.

All this was very sad, at least, in Harry's estimation, and the only conclusion he could arrive at was that she was a regular iceberg, devoid of the feelings natural to her sex.

He felt both piqued and discouraged, and, wonderful to relate, a fifteen-pound salmon which he caught a couple of hours later on, did not wholly succeed in restoring his equanimity.

He was head over ears in love. There could be no doubt whatever about it this time. He wondered how he had been fool enough, ever to dignify by such a name, the spurious passion he had entertained for Mrs. Thompson. She was a dear, good, little soul in her way, he quite admitted that, but she was not to be compared with Andrine. The one was a common, every-day type, the other, the sort of woman, artists



delight to paint and poets rave about. A woman to be idealized as a personification of everything pure and high.

In loving Andrine, he felt that she appealed to the nobler side of his nature, whereas Annie Thompson had affected him almost entirely through the lower and more animal one.

Whatever his faults, he was wise enough to appreciate the difference.

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## CHAPTER XXXII.

### A LESSON IN FLY-TYING.

NECESSARY to say that Harry was punctual to his appointment, and did not keep the fair Andrine waiting one minute. Precisely at eleven o'clock next morning he arrived at Herr Velsine's house. On being shown into the sitting-room by a stout, good-humoured, country wench, it was rather a disappointment to find Frue Velsine seated there writing a letter, just as if she meant to mount guard over her daughter, and prevent the smallest exchange of sentiment. He liked Frue Velsine very much, but he liked Andrine better, and for several hours past he had amused himself by picturing a most delightful *tête-à-tête*, during which the business of the day would be agreeably diversified by a little exceedingly pleasant love-making.

It soon became apparent, however, that the young lady was far from being of the same way of thinking, and took a much more serious and practical view of the matter. Love-making was an art that she did not understand, whilst fly-making was one that she did, and all her preparations were already complete. She had cleared away the table-cloth from the large centre table, spread a couple of newspapers over the polished mahogany, and on these were carefully arranged several cardboard boxes, containing hooks, gut, cobbler's wax, silk, tinsel, feathers, and other requisite materials.

By-and-by, after the first salutations had been exchanged, Frue Velsine, to Harry's inexpressible relief, finished her letter, and said :

"I told you yesterday, Mr. Hopperton, that you might stay as long as you liked, for I was not engaged ; but to-day I am, so I shall only be able to look in upon you every now and then, and must leave you to Andrine's tender mercies. The fact is,

this is baking morning, and the bread will be spoilt if I were not there to superintend its manufacture. You see, I treat you quite without ceremony, and let you into all our family secrets, although some instinct tells me I lose in your estimation by doing so. But we are simple people and you must take us as we are." And with that she was gone.

"Yes, indeed," said Andrine. "By rights I ought to have been helping mamma this morning, so please show your sense of her sacrifice by being an extra good pupil. And now to work." Whereupon she sat herself down at the table with a resolute air, as if she had quite made up her mind to let nothing distract her attention.

Harry felt in no hurry to begin the lesson. He would have liked to dally a little first, but his teacher was so much in earnest that he saw there was nothing for it but to fall in with her mood.

Therefore he followed her example, and Andrine at once opened a small box and proceeded to select a couple of hooks of the requisite size.

"We won't have them either too big or too little to begin upon," she said, "because a medium hook is much the easiest to start with. Now—are you ready, Mr. Hopperton?"

"Yes, quite; only," he added artfully, "I'm afraid I shan't be able to see."

"Why not?"

"I'm too far off."

Her finely pencilled eye-brows raised themselves in an arch, indicative of surprise.

"Oh! indeed. How very unfortunate for you, being so short-sighted. I wonder how you manage to fish."

"I can just contrive to see the fly now and again, and as you know, I'm no great fisherman. Have I your permission to come a little nearer to you?"

She inclined her golden head in a stately fashion, upon which Harry drew his chair close up, until it almost touched Andrine's. Then, the audacious rascal put his head on one side, and looked at her tenderly, but in vain. The frigid maiden took not the slightest notice of his languishing gaze. All her energies were apparently absorbed in unwinding some fine yellow silk from a reel, and in cutting it into two equal lengths.

"This is the beginning of all things," she said, cheerfully.

"Are you attending?"

"Yes," he answered, thinking how much nicer it would be to have a chat first, before settling down to work.

"Very well, then. The first process consists in waxing the silk, and in order to do this properly, you must raise your right knee and stick a pin through your trouser."

"What on earth is that for?"

"To wind the end of the silk round, otherwise it would slip. Now take this piece of cobbler's wax and pass it lightly up and down the silk, the same as you see me doing. When it grows dark, then it is waxed enough. Yellow is the colour generally used by professional tyers, because it is supposed to take the wax better than any other.

It looked easy enough when Andrine did it, nothing could possibly look simpler, but when Harry came to try, he found that with his clumsy fingers, he pressed too hard, and broke the silk in two. He certainly was very awkward, but Andrine kept her patience admirably, and continued to supply him with fresh lengths, until at last he succeeded in getting one properly waxed without its snapping.

"There," she said, encouragingly. "You have achieved something already."

"I've been a precious long time about it," he responded, feeling rather ashamed of his own stupidity.

"That does not matter. As you observed yesterday, you are in no hurry. Do you know that my teacher Ola Erichson, after showing me how to do a thing once or twice, always insisted on my puzzling it out by myself. He said it was the only way to learn, and I do believe he was right, although one may not like the system just at first. However, now for the next step. Take one end of your silk and make three or four turns round the body of the hook, leaving a good space at the head—so."

Harry did as he was told, though he was again forced to make repeated attempts before he finally succeeded in getting his hook to resemble Andrine's.

"Yes, that's not bad," said the girl, critically, after a severe inspection of his handiwork. "And now we want a short piece of gut each, about an inch and a half long, to form the loop. It is best to moisten the gut previously, and to save trouble I generally put mine in my mouth. You may as well do the same with yours."

He obeyed this injunction, and for a minute or two they sat solemnly side by side, not speaking a word for fear of

swallowing the gut, which got under their tongues in a most disagreeable way. Once Harry very nearly choked, through a sudden fit of laughter brought on by the absurdity of the situation, but a severe glance from Andrine restrained him. This beautiful young girl was so terribly earnest.

Presently she withdrew the loop from her rosy mouth, and he followed suit. Then one of his mad impulses seized him.

"Mayn't we change bits?" he said, with seeming innocence. "Somehow, I have rather a fancy for yours."

She looked at him in astonishment.

"Change bits? What on earth for? One is just as good as another, besides," coldly, "it wouldn't be nice."

"I think it would be very nice. And—I mean, Fröken Velsine——"

"Do you? I don't. I see Mr. Smutch was not a solitary specimen of the English so-called gentleman."

He turned fiery red at this reproof. Andrine had not meant it as a particularly severe one. She had made the remark in all innocence, but he felt abominably guilty, and hung his head as if he were thoroughly ashamed of himself. She took no notice of his confusion, but went on in her pretty, serious manner:

"The next thing is, Mr. Hopperton, to bind the gut tightly down on the hook with the silk, taking care to keep it well under and together, else the shape of the body would be spoilt. There! see how I do it."

"It's awfully difficult," he sighed, vainly endeavouring to imitate the movements of her nimble fingers. "Ever so much more so than I imagined. I don't believe I shall ever learn. I'm too old."

"Nonsense. Why, what is your age?"

"I am three-and-twenty. And you?"

"Seventeen," she answered pensively. "Six whole years younger than you. How funny."

"What is there funny about it, Fröken Andrine?"

She drew herself up with a start.

"Nothing. I spoke thoughtlessly." Then in her usual tone she added, "But about the flies. You need not despond. It only wants a little practice, and everybody feels clumsy just at first."

But, in spite of this comforting assurance, poor Harry got hopelessly muddled. First the cobbler's wax stuck to his clothes, then to his hands and shirt-sleeves. He wound the

silk loosely and irregularly, and when Andrine explained that the whole strength of the hook depended upon this operation, and declared he must wind it tighter, he broke it altogether.

"Bother!" he exclaimed disconsolately. "I knew that would happen. What on earth am I to do now?"

She laughed. He was affording her exquisite amusement, and the mere knowledge of this fact increased his irritation a thousand fold. It was abominable to be laughed at by the very person whom he desired to inspire with respect and admiration. Nothing could be more damning to his hopes.

"Do?" she returned cheerfully. "Why begin it all over again to be sure. You mayn't like it, but it will do you a tremendous lot of good."

"I fail to see in what way," he responded stiffly, for his feelings were much hurt by her mirth.

"Pardon me, I forgot you were short-sighted, but you have now given me a good proof of the imperfection of your vision. When people can't do things, Mr. Hopperton, then they must learn, and when they profess themselves willing to learn, they must not mind trouble, especially when their work is bad. Now, are you satisfied?" And she looked at him with dancing eyes.

"As regards the explanation, but not otherwise."

"Why, what more do you want?"

"I want——" he began impetuously. Then he checked himself, and said, "I want a good many things that I am never likely to get, as I daresay you do, too."

"Me! No, I am quite happy."

"In that case you are a very remarkable exception to the great majority of your fellow-creatures, and I cannot wish you any better, Fröken Velsine, than to continue so."

"Thank you," she said simply, but she looked a little puzzled.

After this, they relapsed into silence for awhile, and during the next quarter of an hour, Harry discovered that the lesson was likely to prove a much more serious affair than he had imagined. There was no tempting Andrine into a prolonged conversation, and it became clear to his mind that fly-tying not only required a great deal of nicety, but also an immense amount of perseverance, especially when things went wrong, which in this case they invariably did, no matter what care he took.

He did his best, but his thoughts could not be restrained,



and would stray in a variety of different directions, so that he felt quite vexed with himself for proving so dull a pupil. What a fool Andrine must think him! She knew nothing of the inward tumult that distracted his mind so cruelly, and, of course, could only put him down as a terribly slow and stupid young man. He should, if he were in her place. He did not see the indulgent look with which she watched his movements, and only awoke from the reverie into which he had fallen, by her taking the hook from his hands, and saying, with a smile:

"You don't seem to be getting on very well, Mr. Hopperton. I see I must break through my rule, and help you, after all; otherwise you appear likely to come to a regular stand-still."

"I have come to one long ago."

"To be quite correct, exactly three minutes. I timed it by the clock opposite."

As she spoke, her white fingers drawing up the end of the silk, which had got entangled in the pin that he had neglected to remove from his trousers, came in contact with his, and the mere touch, accidental as it was, sent an electric thrill flying through every vein. He longed to seize her hand in a passionate grasp, and pour down warm kisses upon it. But her utter unconsciousness of his feelings, checked the impulse as suddenly as it had arisen, and forced him to exercise an unusual degree of self-control.

He could not take the liberties with her that he had taken with Annie Thompson. She inspired him with a reverence and awe for which he could scarcely account. A willowy slip of a thing, six years younger than himself, why should he mind her so much, or be so terribly afraid of incurring her displeasure?

As the lesson progressed, he thought with joy that it would take, not one, but many hours of tuition, to perfect him in the art of tying flies. What a good excuse these lessons would prove for enabling him to see a great deal of his preceptress, and surely, as they became better acquainted, some portion of her frigidity would vanish.

"Do you wish me to show you the proper way of binding the gut to the hook, Mr. Hopperton?" inquired Andrine, "or are you tired? You seem a little *distract*."

"No, I am not tired, and shall be only too thankful for your kindness," and, in token of his earnestness, he stooped his head down, until a wandering lock of her fair hair actually

touched his face, and he could see how perfect was the texture of the smooth cheek so temptingly near to his own.

She lifted her big, babyish eyes, and encountered his glance, which by rights ought to have been concentrated on the hook, and she felt that this was a sad abuse of her desire to impart knowledge, and in direct opposition to his expressed wish of acquiring it.

"What are you looking at?" she said almost tartly. "You are not attending one bit, and can't expect to get on, if you won't take any pains."

He blushed up to his very temples, and felt as guilty as if he had committed some desperate crime.

"I—I beg your pardon," he stammered confusedly. "I—was not aware. In fact, I could not help myself."

She made no immediate reply, but merely gazed into the depths of his eyes, as if by so doing she would convey a just and fitting rebuke. And yet the rebuke seemed to lose something of its severity, for even as she gazed her expression changed, and a warm beautiful blush covered her whole face with one rosy wave of colour.

He was as red as she, and they stood and stared at each other for several seconds without attempting to speak.

She was the first to recover her composure, and, womanlike, to try and counteract the effect produced by the emotion they had both exhibited. She tossed back her head like a stag at bay, and said:

"Come, come Mr. Hopperton, this won't do at all. You're a most dreadfully idle pupil, and, what's more, your attention appears to be always wandering. If you don't improve in this respect, I shall be compelled to hand you over to Jens, and let him finish your education. I begin to doubt whether I am equal to the task, and think I ought never to have undertaken it."

This speech alarmed Harry beyond measure. The very thought of her putting her threat into execution overwhelmed him with despair. He there and then resolved to pretend to an absorbing interest in the fly-tying. It was evidently the only method of regaining Andrine's favour. She was so extraordinarily simple and earnest in all her ways, that she did not seem capable of understanding, how two things may perfectly well be carried on at the same time. Nevertheless he had moved her a little. He had made her blush, and that at any rate was something. It showed he possessed some

influence, even although it was only a disturbing one. Still anything was preferable to absolute insensibility and indifference. Where there was feeling there was hope. Thus he argued inwardly, whilst his heart fluttered and his pulses throbbed.

The lesson now progressed fairly well for a considerable time. He dared make no more diversions, and Andrine recovered her normal state of equanimity. When the difficulty of the gut had been overcome, she proceeded to show her now diligent pupil how to put on a silver tag, and then a couple of twists of orange silk, after which came a golden pheasant topping to form the tail. Then followed the tinsel, body-silk and hackle, which latter had first to be carefully stripped down one side.

The work now became so interesting, that Harry really grew absorbed in it, and his fair teacher, noticing the difference, congratulated him on the amendment.

Hitherto, he had not possessed the slightest notion how a fly was constructed, regarding it always as a mysterious work of art, quite beyond his comprehension; but he now began to understand something of the manner in which it was manufactured. He was particularly pleased when Andrine pointed out that directly a person acquired sufficient knowledge, all the old and broken flies, which otherwise would be discarded, came in useful, since, with the addition of a few extra feathers, a new hook, and a fresh piece of gut, they were as good as ever again. Although he had paid Mr. Farlow's bill without comment, he had been a little startled at the amount, and he perceived that great economies might be effected in the future, especially when once he rendered himself independent of Mr. Smutch's aid.

"The other day," said Andrine, pausing for a moment to re-wax her silk, "I read an English book, written by a great authority on fishing, and the author declares that tying flies was one of the most exciting pursuits he knew."

"Did he really?" said Harry.

"Yes, and, do you know, I can quite understand it. When you come to take two or three strands of this feather and of that, and don't realise exactly what the effect will be until you put them all together, you have no idea how interesting it is. You feel as if nothing on earth could move you till your fly was finished."

"How long do you take to make one as a rule?"

"On an average, about three-quarters of an hour. But it

is difficult to say exactly. Some flies go right from the very beginning, and others give you no end of trouble, and never satisfy you, try what you will."

"That's like my feeble attempt," said Harry ruefully.

"Oh, you must not lose heart. You have done ever so much better since you have left off staring about you and have taken to attending. I prophesy that in course of time, I shall be quite proud of my pupil."

Andrine was growing much more chatty, and although she still would not allow any little sentimental divergences to take place, such as would have filled Harry with beatitude, he felt decidedly happier in his mind, and began to hope that time would cement their friendship, and produce a warmer feeling on her side. Meanwhile, it was very delightful to be able to sit close beside her, and hear the sound of her bell-like voice, and when she was not looking, let his eyes feast on the beauty of her fair young face. It was so frank and open, that he could not believe its owner harboured one single evil or unkind thought. The soul seemed to lie mirrored in those great, clear, innocent blue eyes, that looked straight before them, as if no knowledge of the world's wickedness had ever caused them to drop. She was pure and stainless as some lily bud, gradually unfolding its loveliness to the sun.

Andrine's handkerchief fell to the ground. They stooped to pick it up at the same moment, and again their fingers met.

His heart beat fast, but he was determined to behave well, so long as he could retain the smallest control over himself.

"I—I beg your pardon," he stammered. "I did not mean to offend you."

Once more the rose-pink cheeks deepened in colour, and her eye-lids seemed to quiver.

"It was an accident. You need not beg my pardon for an accident," she said, with direct simplicity.

And then she hid the handkerchief away in the pocket of her apron, and nothing more was said on that subject.

Harry was vastly relieved to find how amiably she took the incident. He stood in wholesome fear of his young divinity, and continued on his very best behaviour.

Time passed so rapidly, that when Frue Velsine entered shortly afterwards, and declared they must clear away their things, as Elizabetha wanted to lay the cloth for dinner, they were both quite astonished. Needless to say, in spite of all their labours, the flies were not nearly finished. The putting

on of the throat hackle had proved a sore puzzle to Harry. Somehow or other, his great, clumsy fingers always *would* get in the way, just at the critical moment.

Nevertheless, Andrine declared graciously, that he had done very fairly for the first day, and must not be discouraged if the results did not quite come up to his anticipations.

Perceiving that Harry was most unwilling to depart, and seemed to have a great many last words to say, Frue Velsine in her kindly way came forward, and invited him to share their mid-day meal.

"My husband has had to leave home on business, to-day," she said, "so if you will take his place we shall be very happy, that is to say, if you can content yourself with our modest fare."

Harry gratefully accepted the invitation, and said to himself that if ever he had the supreme happiness of calling Frue Velsine, mother-in-law, he should not forget this act of kindness on her part. Every hour of Andrine's society was a distinct gain, according to his point of view. He could not bear to leave the house whilst she was in it. He felt so irresistibly drawn towards her.

And what a pleasant, homely dinner that was! How free from all conventionality and pretence. Andrine helped Elizabetha to carry in, and remove the dishes, after the good, old fashion, which renders it a pleasure to women, to perform the household services that fashionable ladies despise and consider derogatory to their station. She tripped about and laughed and talked, and seemed to brighten the whole room by her readiness and grace. She had no false shame. It never seemed to occur to her, that this grand, young English gentleman might possibly think less well of her, because she went into the kitchen without ceremony, and tried to relieve their solitary "pige" (girl) of some portion of the work. In fact, she was so natural as to be quite callous to opinion on these points.

The *menu* was neither grand, nor yet an abundant one. It consisted of a piece of beautifully boiled salmon, and a lean, and decidedly tough chicken, followed by a dish of custard, which Frue Velsine herself had prepared; and yet Harry enjoyed himself as he had never done at a stately London dinner-party. There was a cheerfulness, a sociability, a refinement about the present entertainment, very different from the ghastly ordeals of the Metropolis, where young men are paired



off with old women, and old men with young women, and expected to keep up a lively conversation for two mortal hours, when they have not an idea in common, and do not possess the smallest notion as to what subjects are and are not agreeable. That is fashionable folks' way of entertaining their friends, but here in Norway you could sit in a charmingly airy room, with an exquisite view, and not feel that were a young man asked for the sole purpose of making up to the daughter of the house. You were treated like one of the family, but nobody wanted to "catch" you.

Frue Velsine's hospitality was genuine, and possessed no vulgar element of match-making in it. Unlike London mothers, she did not wish to part with her daughter, and the longer she could keep her the greater her satisfaction. Therefore it did not occur to her to look upon her guest as a possible husband for Andrine. She was pleased to see that he admired her, and equally pleased to think the girl should have some distraction in her quiet and secluded life, but here her thoughts ended.

Andrine was only seventeen, and when she did marry, Frue Velsine had quite made up her mind she was to have another fair-haired King Olaf, like her own beloved Oscar.

After dinner came coffee and dessert, consisting of dried raisins and yellow almonds. It was long past three when at length Harry rose to take his leave, feeling he could no longer decently remain. To his great joy Andrine accompanied him to the garden gate, as she had done on the previous day. Apparently it was a habit of hers, thus to speed the parting guest.

"Are you going fishing this afternoon?" he inquired shyly.

"I don't know. I'm not quite sure. I may, and I may not."

"Do," he said, softening his voice persuasively. "You shall fish all my side of the river if you will."

"Thank you, Mr. Hopperton, I do not require that generous offer for an inducement."

"You are not offended, are you?"

She looked away and said nothing.

"I shall be at the Bridge pool in an hour from now," he went on, emboldened by her silence. "Fishing is dull work when the salmon won't take. I don't ask you to come against your wish, but—it would be awfully nice to have somebody to talk to." And with that he went away, without waiting to see

the effect produced by his words. He did not expect she would go. She had treated the suggestion so quietly and with such apparent indifference, but lo! when he reached the Bridge pool, there to his infinite astonishment was Andrine, fishing away steadily.

His heart gave a bound, and he lost no time in crossing to her side of the river. It struck him her face had a shade more colour than usual, though perhaps that might be attributed to the sun, which on this particular afternoon hung red in the heavens.

"How awfully good of you to come," he said, "I was so afraid you wouldn't."

She gave him a queer, little, uncertain glance.

"I fail to see wherein my goodness consists. I should have come at any rate. I always fish when the river is in order."

"Oh! of course. Forgive my stupidity." His spirits were completely damped by her reply, but for all that, he did not cross to the opposite bank until the sun sank down behind the mountains, leaving them purple-black against the ruddy sky, and Andrine declared she could not stay out any longer.

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## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### AFRAID OF A GIRL.

TIME passed away, and although all the first part of July was so fine that the fishing proved an almost constant source of disappointment, Harry managed to console himself remarkably well, and bore the lack of sport with surprising patience and equanimity. Scarcely a day passed now without his meeting Andrine by the river-side. Indeed, it was remarkable that their love of angling seemed to increase as the prospect of catching salmon diminished. In spite of the weather they perseveringly pretended to flog the pools, although many of the smaller ones were now so shallow that every stone might be counted at the bottom of them.

And though they did not succeed in taking many fish during this period, it is to be presumed the young people enjoyed themselves, since regularly towards sun-down they sallied forth from their respective homes and contrived to meet—quite by accident, of course—and compare experiences.

Then, if the glare still continued too great—as it often did—for the fish to rise, if the cloudless sky stretched in one serene blue vault over their heads, and the glittering white peaks all around dazzled the eye, in spite of patches of snow daily disappearing from their precipitous slopes, they would seek the shelter of some big rock or friendly bush and sit down side by side, waiting for the sun to withdraw his golden face from the water.

On these occasions there was nothing to be done but talk; and it was surprising, when they were in each other's society, how quickly the time slipped away. Sometimes Phœbus would sink leisurely to rest, and the gliding river changed from green to yellow, from yellow to red, and from red to a deep bluish-grey, before either of them was aware of the fact. Time did not exist for them. They laughed at the grim old tyrant.

Over and over again Harry heaved a sigh of vexation, when Jens, knocking the ash from his pipe, stretched his great limbs and declared that twilight was creeping on fast, and, if they meant to fish at all, they ought certainly to begin and not delay another moment.

It was curious how Harry's ardour for angling had evaporated, although to do him justice he was still as keen as ever when once fairly settled to work. But the difficulty was to make a start. It required no little moral courage to tear himself away from Andrine's side, and put an end to the delight of gazing into her blue eyes.

Some time ago they had come to an arrangement by which they agreed to fish the pools alternately. By this means they could keep together, and, as Harry artfully pointed out to the girl, Jens' services might thus be utilized as gaffer, and the small boy be dispensed with, who, although extremely enthusiastic, was a very indifferent hand at landing the fish when his mistress had caught them.

Andrine cast down her white eyelids with maidenly demureness when this suggestion was first mooted, but otherwise she offered no objection to it. On the other hand, she did not exhibit any lively symptoms of delight, such as Harry was lying in wait for. She accepted the proposition with her usual calm, and he could only attribute such long-continued imperturbability on her part, to some inherent want of sensitiveness. No doubt this intense serenity of disposition, that imparted to all those with whom she came in contact a profound tranquillity and sense of repose, lent her an added charm, but every now

and then it was undeniably provoking. For to tell the truth she puzzled him desperately.

In these days he would have given all the world to discover whether she loved him or not. It may be said, that with most pretty girls, it is easy enough for a rich, and fairly good-looking young man to ascertain the fact; but, strange as it will undoubtedly appear, this was not so in Andrine's case. Child of nature as she was in many things, in others she seemed hedged round by a maidenly reticence and modesty, which rendered the task of breaking through these innocent, but powerful, defences extremely difficult. A London young lady, expert in flirtation, and the tricks of coquetry would have been far easier to woo than this fair, straightforward girl, of the simple mind, candid eyes, and direct speech. In short she completely baffled Harry. That was the truth, although it was a long time before he chose to admit it. It seemed absurd, but he dared not precipitate matters. He was so terribly afraid of her refusing him, if he proposed too suddenly, and before she had gradually been prepared to expect such an event.

Of late he began to despair of making any impression on her. He had practised every means of rendering himself agreeable, and apparently in vain. As is known, he commenced the siege by trying a fine volley of compliments. These fell short of the mark, and produced little or no effect. He had next gone in for sentiment, but with the most disheartening results, and now, here he was reduced to mere platonic friendship, a kind of brotherly and sisterly intercourse, pleasant enough in its way when you were not in love, but terribly unsatisfying when you were. In fact, nothing could be more so. Open aversion was infinitely preferable to this passive toleration. If she would only give some sign, however slight, that might lead him to suppose he was not altogether indifferent to her, then, he told himself, he could be as patient as Job. Nearly all girls when they came to seventeen or eighteen thought of getting married. Surely she was no exception to her sex.

But Andrine, if she entertained any notions on the subject of matrimony, took care not to reveal them. True, every now and then she raised his hopes by some transient blush, some swift, shy look, or sudden smile, but as a rule she was abominably frank and unconcerned, and to all appearances utterly unconscious of her own powers of attraction. He

began to wonder quite seriously, if she was that *rara avis*—a woman absolutely free from coquetry, and to consider that no girl, however beautiful she might be, was quite perfect without a touch of it.

He thought of Annie Thompson, and wished that Andrine possessed some small portion of her innate desire to please. How it would add to her loveliness. How irresistible it would render her. As it was, she kept him at bay. In spite of every endeavour to ingratiate himself, he never seemed able to get beyond a certain point. That was the vexatious part of it. As long as he talked of the flies and the fishing, the scenery or the weather, she was all friendliness and amiability, but directly he began to intimate that he loved her dearly, then she shrank into her shell like a snail, and either did not speak again for quite ten minutes, or else started an entirely different subject of conversation. Now all this was very disheartening to an ardent lover bursting to make confession of the passion that devoured him. For as Andrine held back, or Harry fancied that she did, his love grew stronger, and less under control. Every day made it harder to conceal; for there is nothing like a little wholesome opposition and uncertainty, to fan Cupid's torch into a burning flame. Under favourable circumstances it smoulders gently, and does not consume the human heart, with its fiery heat, but given an adverse wind, no matter how slight, and pouf!—up flares the furnace, and not all the fire engines in the world will put it out.

By the middle of July, Harry was head over ears in love with Andrine. Her apparent indifference converted what might have proved but a temporary liking into a real and deep-rooted passion.

He adored the candour and simplicity of her character, even whilst he felt inclined to quarrel with them. Her innocence was charming, her serenity delightful, if only they were compatible with her entertaining some affection for himself. He knew she liked him as a friend. Instinct told him that. But as a husband? Why could not instinct dive a little deeper beneath the surface, instead of leaving him a prey to torturing doubt? So he feared and trembled, and actually had not the courage to propose.

Meantime, Andrine appeared quite unaware of the troublous thoughts that disturbed his mind. Only on very rare occasions did she show any recognition of their presence. He



marvelled at this, for over and over again it seemed to him as if his looks must betray him. He could not understand her not guessing what was in his heart. It almost appeared like stupidity on her part—stupidity or wilful blindness.

So they continued to go out fishing together, he, waiting each day for an opportunity to declare his love, and failing to seize it when it presented itself, through a sudden mistrust of his own wisdom, and she, outwardly calm and composed, and apparently undisturbed by disquieting emotions.

The sight of her straight, slender figure standing on the bank, whilst she raised her rod to cast, set all his blood aflame. He longed to wind his arm round her waist and crush her to his heart. She looked so fair, so dangerously attractive, as her supple form swayed to and fro, following each movement of the line.

Once or twice he strode to her side, with words of passion burning on his lips, but when she turned round in surprise and looked straightly at him with those clear, searching eyes of hers, they died away, and murmuring some foolish commonplace, he stole back from whence he had come, and silently recommenced watching her, only again to fall under the influence of the same sensations. The attempt to conceal them did but increase their vehemence. Thus the days passed feverishly. He was miserable when away from Andrine. He could hardly bear her out of his sight, and yet, in her presence a restless, dissatisfied yearning gnawed at his heart-strings, and prevented him from enjoying it. When he went home he did nothing but think of the things he meant to say and hadn't said, and composed speeches for the morrow, which never found utterance when that morrow came. Love suffers so when it meets with no response. All the joy and the gladness fall from it like leaves from a decaying tree, when sweet reciprocity is denied, and it must flourish in solitude.

Yet it is good for people to feel keenly and to go through a few sharp experiences. Character strengthens, and the mind becomes more tolerant, and loses something of its angularity and crudeness.

Harry thought far more tenderly now of poor, little Annie Thompson than he had ever done before. He could realise what she had gone through, and a profound compassion filled his being, when he recalled how she had loved—and to a great extent—had loved in vain. He had been flattered, pleased,

and admired her fresh, *piquante* style of beauty, but he had never cared for her as he cared for Andrine.

The strange cross-purposes of Life, the curious and seemingly cruel jumble of marriage, in which absolutely uncongenial people daily come in friction, with no prospect of escape from the bondage that holds them, struck him with a species of terror. Heaven or hell, matrimony meant the one or the other to all those capable of strong feeling. He had seen the agony of it in Annie Thompson's case, and if Andrine could not love him, why then—then he would rather turn his back on Sandéthal, and never behold her face any more. The pain would be nothing, in comparison with seeing her remain cold as ice to him, and perhaps smile on some other man. He would do her no wrong. He would not attempt to force her affections in any way, but the time was drawing near when he must know his fate. Of the sincerity of his own feelings he no longer doubted.

The last few weeks had taught him very clearly to distinguish between a pure and an impure passion. He perceived the beauty of the one, and how it calls into play all the highest and best part of a man's nature, whilst the other leads to petty fraud, and deceit, accompanied by huge self-loathing in the periods of reaction that surely follow every guilty outbreak. Love? It was not love, but horrible debasing madness, which shut the eyes to duty, honour, reason, and dragged its unhappy victims down to the lowest depths of shame. He saw, as in a mirror, how one thing leads to another, how a first falsehood necessitates a second, until both parties are engulfed in a sea of deception, from which there is no escape. For they must go on lying and acting, having once begun, otherwise their sin would be discovered.

And is *this* Love? This thing that robs man and woman of self-respect, and of one another's esteem? No, never. It is a mystification of the senses, a perversion of the brain, a deadly infatuation which must be struggled against at every cost. For ah! the awakening! which inevitably comes sooner or later. How sad, how humiliating it is, how full of degradation! During those few moments when Harry had felt the grasp of Mr. Thompson's nervous fingers round his throat, and knew himself to be utterly and wholly in the wrong, he had received a lesson that he was never likely to forget. When he looked into Andrine's fair, frank face he asked himself, with a groan, if he could ever tell her of the disgraceful scene which had taken

place that night by the river bank. He would have given half his income to blot it out from his memory. To pour such a tale into her innocent ears would seem a profanation, and yet he should not like to marry her holding anything back, which might rise up in the future, and produce a coldness between them. He was bitterly conscious of his own faults. The love he bore to the girl had quickened and purified his nature, whilst the majesty of the scenery, the unwordable calm of this secluded valley, far away from all the feverish and perplexing influences of a large city, induced better thoughts, a higher standard of morality. He had formerly admired Mr. Smutch's teachings, but now he recoiled from them with horror. The idea that women were only men's playthings, which his friend had carefully inculcated, vanished before the grave simplicity, and exquisite childishness of Andrine. She raised and elevated him, and he revered her almost as a Saint. The facile, pleasure-loving Harry was, to use a piscatorial expression, well-hooked.

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## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### THE JAWS OF DEATH.

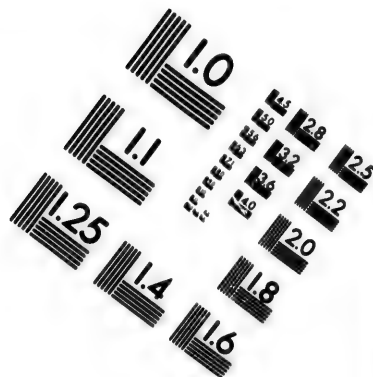
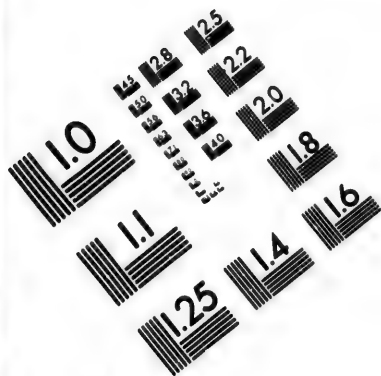
THINGS were in this state, when one afternoon Andrine and Harry met as usual by the river-side.

For the first time for several days, the sky was cloudy and the water dark, and, although another spate was badly wanted to render the sport good, Jens appeared much more hopeful than he had been of late.

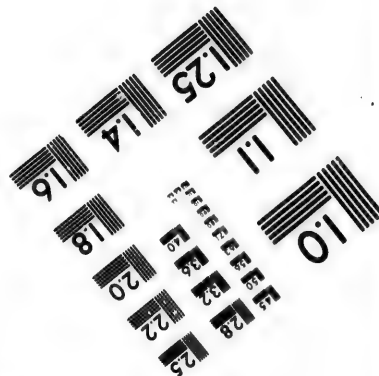
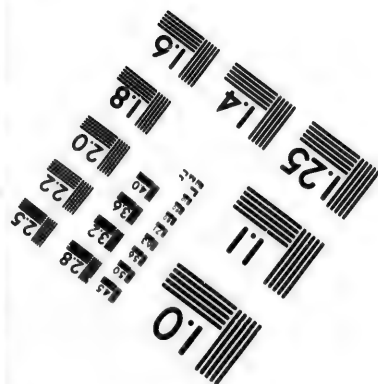
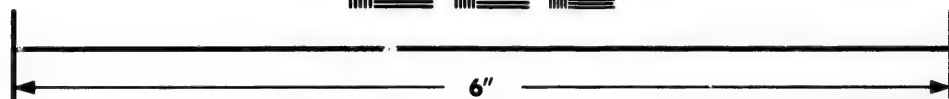
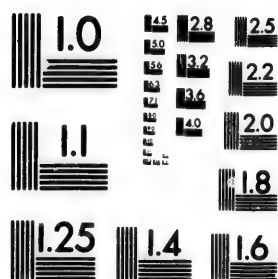
Consequently, after a short consultation, they settled to try the far-off beat, and go straight to the upper pools, where, as the season advanced, the fish abounded in greater numbers than in the lower ones, although, in all of them, without rain, they rose very charily.

Andrine was an excellent walker, and made nothing of the distance; moreover, she was accustomed to the path, if such it might be called, and bounded over intervening ditches and boulders like a young goat, picking her way from one stone to another when she came to a mountain streamlet, and never, by any chance, making a slip. In spite of the extraordinary fairness and clearness of her complexion which gave her a certain appearance of delicacy, she enjoyed perfect health, and





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breathing, as she had done all her life, the most gloriously pure air, uncontaminated by smoke, or the pollutions of a town, she could walk in a manner that would have made many a languid, dissipated, worn-out London girl stare.

Her step had the buoyancy and springiness, peculiar to people in good training, who feel it is a pleasure to live for life's sake, and who do not require perpetual excitement to enable them to drag through existence. But then, her limbs were free and unfettered. She had the advantage there.

She was not weighted down by yards and yards of superfluous stuff, arranged in bunches at the back of the waist, and hung round her unfortunate body as if the sole aim and object was to burden it as much as possible. Neither did she wear that modern abomination—a dress improver, nor steels, nor strings, nor tight boots and high heels, nor, in short, any of those instruments of torture, for such they really are, which poor, senseless women seem continually doomed to wear, under the deluded idea that they are “the fashion.” Here in this Norwegian Fjord, shut in from the outer world by purple mountains and grey precipitous rocks, Fashion held no sway. Women did not dress because they were *afraid* of each other, as they do in London, Paris, and all the great cities of Europe, but because they wanted to cover themselves with something warm and comfortable. And the effect was infinitely more picturesque, and infinitely more becoming than the screwed-in waists, unsightly protuberances, and often ludicrous combinations of the civilized world.

Andrine's short, serge skirt fell perfectly straight from the hips downwards, and showed a very pretty foot beneath it, which not even a pair of wide-soled, broad-heeled, country-made boots could render either large or ugly. No hideous prominences disturbed the graceful outlines of her figure, or suggested an imitation of the Hottentot Venus. Her clothes, in short, were not an inconvenience or an incumbrance, as they are with her town-bred sisters, who are mostly forced into one narrow groove, like sheep following in the wake of a few incompetent leaders.

“Poor Dowdy,” do they exclaim, with a disdainful toss of their well-fringed heads?

Well, and if she were, what did it matter? Clothes are not everything in this world. It is possible to be pretty and admired without possessing smart frocks, and after all, dowdiness is very much a matter of opinion. Some few people are capable

of appreciating what is intrinsically artistic, quite independently of the fashions. Their taste is not dictated by milliners and journals, as is that of the bulk of women-kind.

At any rate, Harry found no fault with Andrine's appearance, as he walked behind her in Indian file, brushing through the closely-grown hazel and fir trees, and noted how the chequered light fell in fantastic patterns through the green trellis of leaves, and, when a gleam of sunshine came shooting out from between two heavy clouds, lit up the pale gold of her long, fair hair. He thought he had never seen anyone half so beautiful or so graceful, and she reminded him of a perfect jewel in a perfect setting. She seemed an incarnation of all the poetry, the chasteness, and purity of her native land.

When they arrived at the Upper Fos, a little discussion arose as to who was to fish it. Andrine wanted Harry to begin, but as there seemed a tolerably fair chance of hooking a salmon, and luck had gone somewhat against her of late, he desired her to do so.

The lady however triumphed, as ladies nearly always do, when they are determined to have their own way. It needs a very strong man to resist their arguments and persuasions, especially when they are backed up by a pair of lovely, beseeching eyes, and two little rose-buds of lips. Harry felt a trifle selfish—he knew she wished him to have the best of the fishing, and he loved her for it all the more, but of course he yielded the point. He could not vex her by insisting.

The Upper Fos was a fine, large pool. Immediately above, the river took a sharp curve, and then widening out, its waters came flowing swiftly down, lapping the grey stones on either side for a space of some fifty or sixty yards. Then the banks narrowed; on the right rose up a wall of rock, cracked and fissured; on the left, the original granite seemed to have been split up by some destroying force, and lay scattered about in huge lumps, which projected far into the current. When the river was high they were mostly covered, but to-day the water seethed and foamed around them, leaving their dry grey surfaces visible.

Some little way above this point, the river appeared to gather itself together for the leap it was about to take, and glided swiftly on, in one dark, unbroken body, until it reached the great ledge of rock which, jutting out, constituted the first fall. Over this it rolled with a thunderous roar, and then, white, churned, troubled, rushed through a series of rapids, which at

last brought it to a lower level, where it paused in a deep pool, as if striving to regain its strength. But so smooth, so tranquil and glass-like did the river appear, up to the very moment when, like some mad thing, it suddenly hurled itself down into the raging abyss beneath, that no one could have suspected the enormous strength of the current above the fall, or the huge velocity it possessed. The eye was deceived by its apparent quietude, and only when some dead leaf or stick came tearing and whirling along, did it realize its power. No boat, handled by oars, could bear up against such a stream, and as this treacherous spot was the one most favoured by big fish, an expedient had therefore been hit upon.

Consequently, to the bow and to the stern of the boat were attached a couple of stout ropes. Jens remained on shore, and held their ends in his hands, whilst the fisherman drifted out into the centre of the pool; the far side being better than the near. Thus the desired spot was reached. It was a proceeding to which they were all accustomed, and only Jens knew the enormous strain placed on the ropes, and upon his sinews. Strong, powerful man as he was, it was often just as much as ever he could do to hold the boat back, and counteract the force of the current. To-day he looked at the ropes as usual. For his own satisfaction he invariably took this precaution, for, though he had never met with an accident, he was aware that the least mishap might prove exceedingly awkward. The ropes were a little frayed, and began to show decided symptoms of wearing. He shook his head. He had not thought that they were quite so far gone.

"Anything the matter, Jens?" inquired Harry, who standing by, saw his face assume a serious expression.

"No," he replied, "but next time come to Oppers Fos, bring new rope. Dis one it get old. No safe much longer. Might break."

"Oh! it will do for to-day, no doubt," said Harry lightly, and without giving the matter another thought he jumped into the boat, leaving Jens to mutter to himself. Andrine, who had been gathering some wild flowers, now went and seated herself on one of the big stones before mentioned, that were some way below the point where Harry was to begin fishing. Here she could watch his movements, and also see the beautiful white fall, as it came tumbling down in a series of snowy cataracts, whose opaline spray rose high into the air. Borne by the wind, it fell in a shower of glittering dew-drops on the

silvery birch trees growing all around, that gave forth a fresh, moist odour.

Jens pushed the boat off from the shore with a vigorous shove of his long, right arm. The current soon caught her, and swung her round, as if delighted to test its might on this new toy. Jens planted his feet firmly on the ground, leant back, and tightened first one rope, then the other, until he succeeded in getting her broadside on. The colour mounted to his face, and his muscles swelled with the strength he was forced to exert.

Harry now lengthened his line and began to fish. He had cast over this pool so often, in a similar manner, that no thought of danger ever entered his mind. Why should it?

The water raced past him in smooth, oily eddies, that came gurgling up against the keel of the boat, and breaking, left a long line of clear green bubbles behind them. He might have made some dozen casts, when to his infinite delight a shiny black back and fin just broke the surface of the water, and disappeared, bearing his fly downwards. Ecstatic moment! When you have fished for a week and not seen the sign of a salmon, and then suddenly hook one, when least expected.

"Hurrah, hurrah!" he shouted to his companions on the bank. "I'm into him at last."

They nodded their heads sympathetically and prepared to watch the fray with beaming countenances. Andrine rose hurriedly from her seat and rejoined Jens, whose eyes were fixed on the boat, which was growing more and more difficult to maintain in position.

Whirr went the reel, and out sped the line in a manner whose fascination only the born angler can appreciate. However often a man may experience the sensation its charm never fades. The first run of a good fish is like a fine gallop to hounds. It always lives in the memory, and forms a green spot to look back upon. Harry steadied himself in the somewhat cranky boat, preparatory to a tough fight. The salmon was strong and so was the current. Resistance intensified the pleasure of playing him and magnified his size. In his heart he believed that he had caught another thirty-pounder. His energies were so engrossed that he hardly heard a loud cry from Jens, followed by a shriller one from Andrine, which caused him to look hastily round.

In an instant he comprehended his danger.

Both ropes had given way at the same moment, and had



broken off close to where they were attached to the boat. The ends hung loosely in Jens' hands, whose face had suddenly lost every vestige of colour. And well might he change countenance, for the boat, directly it was no longer restrained, began gliding with alarming speed towards the fall, which all three knew meant certain death. The salmon took a great leap right out of the water. His shining body gleamed in the eyes of his captor, and seemed to mock at him. Then he dived out of sight. He was off. Harry just wondered at the marvellous change wrought in his own sensations. He was absolutely indifferent to the loss, and threw his rod down into the bottom of the boat. The transition from joy to abject terror was appalling, and a sickening feeling came over him as he stood there helpless and, to all appearances, beyond human aid. He thought of swimming, but no man could swim against such a stream. He would be carried over the fall were he the finest swimmer in the world. Then he looked to see if there were oars in the boat, though he doubted if they could be of any use. But there were none, only a broken old paddle, sometimes used as a rudder. He seized it, however, and plied it with feverish haste. In vain; his desperate strokes produced not the slightest effect. He was gliding, gliding, gliding on.

In a frightfully short space of time all would be over, and death loomed inevitable. He cast a despairing glance towards the shore. Jens stood as one paralyzed, his frame rigid, his eyes staring blankly into vacancy. Andrine was ghastly pale. At sight of her his love rose up and overpowered him. He waved his hand in an agony of bitter emotion.

"Good-bye, good-bye," he cried, in a voice he no longer recognised as his own. "I am going." . . .

The blood in his veins froze, his heart stopped beating, and a great horror filled his whole being.

Nearer and nearer sped the boat to that fatal fall, whirled along like some doomed thing. Was there no hope—none? He could see the big bubbles hurrying past in one mad race, patches of white foam accumulating as they neared the rocky ledge, and ever in his ears the fall of the tumbling river sounded louder and louder.

Good God! was he to die thus, in the very spring of life, when he was so well, so strong, and had only just begun to taste of its sweetness? Was the sun to be shut out from him, for ever? Should he never see the sky, nor the birds, nor the

trees again? And Andrine—must he leave her, just when he was beginning to cherish hopes that some day her love might be his? Some day? Ah! there would be no "some day" for him. His life would be nothing but a stepping-stone from one state of the unknown to another. Oh! the cursed gift of personal identity. He had not suffered before he was born, why did he suffer now? And why did he fear Death so? Why did it clutch at his heart in this agonizing manner? He was not a coward as a rule. A man can but die once. A few years more or less, what mattered it? So he tried to reason. And then a great wave of bitterness descended upon his spirit, and his soul cried out in anguish: "Oh! do not let me die now. Grant me time. I am not fit to be hurled into Eternity. I am a poor, weak mortal. I have sinned and done wrong. I have had base thoughts, and selfish instincts. Oh! God, if there be a God, show thy mercy upon me!"

In vain his prayer. The great Creator of all things did not stop the river's flow to save him. The current sucked the boat down. Another minute, and all would be over. A convulsive shudder ran through his frame. He shut his eyes with sickening apprehension, and gave himself up for lost.

Suddenly a clear, shrill voice rent the air.

"Catch it, catch it," cried Andrine in tones of command.

Ha! there was a chance yet. A thousand blessings on the intrepid girl. While Jens stood motionless with terror, Andrine recovered her presence of mind. She snatched the ropes from him, and tied them together, then she weighted her pocket handkerchief with stones, and attached it to one end.

Flying along the shore, she reached the broken rocks that stood up from the river's bed. She jumped, she climbed, she scrambled. How she did it, she never knew, but at last she reached the extreme stone of all, her feet wet, her petticoats soaked; with the raging torrent hissing around her, and the spray of the fall moistening her face. The rock was slippery; she had hard work to maintain herself there, and the mere sight of that white caldron below made her dizzy, but something in her heart, some strange power which she could not pause to analyze, held her up, and gave her a kind of unnatural courage. Onwards, onwards, carried on the bosom of the hurrying water, came the boat. It was not fifteen yards from her.

Harry saw his opportunity, and all the animal man—the physical clinging to life, leapt up within him.

"For God's sake take good aim," he yelled. "It is my last chance."

In that supreme moment, her lips parted in a smile. She looked like a succouring angel, so calm, so confident in herself. Brave girl! Her father's blood—the blood of the old Jarls and Vikings did not run in her veins for nothing.

Her face was as white as the snow on the peaks that surrounded her, but her blue eyes shone with a strong and steady light which never wavered, and which brought warmth back to his frozen heart.

Thud! And down fell the handkerchief into the bottom of the boat, the rope curling in the air like a serpent.

He seized it, as a drowning man catches at a straw. With a jerk the rope tautened, quivered, and checked the boat's mad course. It staggered and stood still, every timber shivering beneath the angry current.

Andrine could not have withstood the strain, but she had taken the precaution to wind the other end of the rope tightly round a tree. The tree creaked, and bent almost double. It was but a young sapling, and threatened to give way altogether; but now, up rushed Jens, who had regained his senses when the danger was partially averted, and exerting all his mighty strength, inch by inch hauled the boat up against the rushing stream, and brought her safely to shore.

When Harry stepped on to terra firma he was trembling like an aspen leaf. He had received a very severe shock, from which it would take him long to recover thoroughly. His first thought was for Andrine—the beloved being to whom he owed his life, and without whose heroic efforts he would now have been a dead man.

In saving him, it was easy to see in what a dangerous position she had placed herself. The stone on which she stood was small and rounded. One false step and she might be precipitated into the river.

Looking at it, he wondered how she had ever got there. A distance of three or four feet separated each stone, and between them curled, and splashed, and hissed the boisterous water, like a lion roaring for its prey.

"Can you get back?" he shouted to her. "Be careful how you move."

She turned, and in turning nearly fell. Then she stood and looked at him in a vague, dazed kind of way.

"I—I don't know. I'll try. But I feel giddy." And she put up her hand to her brow.

She would have fallen for certain, had not Jens bounded forwards, and jumping from boulder to boulder, seized her in his arms, and carried her like a little child to the bank.

She was quite colourless. Her fair, plaited hair hung down on either side of her face, and her blue eyes were closed as if in an eternal sleep. But that same beautiful smile still lingered on her lips.

Jens laid her tenderly on the ground, and began rubbing her little cold hands with his great strong ones.

"Andrine, Andrine!" cried Harry wildly, flinging himself down by her side in an agony of alarm. "What is the matter with you? Tell me, oh, my darling! You must know how cheaply I should hold my life, if purchased by your own!"

But the impassioned words provoked no answer. She had fainted. He felt very queer and tremulous himself, but it was clear to his mind, that in accusing her of want of feeling he had wronged her sorely. She was as warm-hearted as she was beautiful. It was he who, in his egotism and impatience, had not known how to appreciate her virtues at their full value. This rare, pale, bud of womanhood was not to be snatched at like a common flower.

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## CHAPTER XXXV.

### FRIENDS IN NAME, ENEMIES AT HEART.

THERE was no more fishing done that afternoon. The nerves of the whole party had received too great a shock to enable them to settle down again calmly to the pursuit of the wily salmon.

When Andrine came to her senses, she opened her eyes and said faintly:

"Where am I? What has happened?"

Suddenly a wave of vivid colour swept over her pale face as she perceived Harry and Jens both bending anxiously over her, and glancing at the former, she added, with a returning effort of memory: "Ah! yes; I remember. I thought—that you were dying."

For a moment her eyes met his, and lingered tenaciously in their gaze. Then the blush on her cheeks grew hotter, and, averting her head, she said abruptly:

"Take me home. I want to go home."

But she was not sufficiently recovered to be able to walk, and when she had risen to her feet could only make one or two staggering steps forward. She halted and looked round perplexedly.

"I—I don't quite know what is the matter with me. I feel so queer."

"Don't exert yourself," said Harry. "You have only just recovered from a long faint."

"De Fröken no can go 'til fods' (on foot)," put in Jens decidedly. "I vil bring one man's stolkjærre."

And before Andrine had time to protest, he was gone, clearing the ground with the strides of a giant.

Directly she found herself left alone with Harry, a strange, new shyness and sense of embarrassment stole over her. Something seemed swelling in her heart almost to bursting point, and yet it kept her silent and tongue-tied. She tried to make an indifferent remark, just to relieve the awkwardness of the situation, but words failed her. The novelty of her sensations was positively alarming. It was as if a dam had been removed from a stream, and the fierce waters suddenly swept everything before them. Her whole being quivered and throbbed with a hitherto unknown emotion. And her woman's instinct bade her conceal it, and hide it away like a treasure too precious to be revealed unless ardently sought for. But he? How could he know all the innocent shifts to which maidenly modesty has recourse, fleeing when it wishes to be pursued, hiding when it longs to be found?

For a few seconds he stood and watched her, without speaking, hoping to glean some encouragement from the expression of her face; then unable to restrain himself any longer, he said impulsively:

"I feel I can never thank you sufficiently for having saved me from so horrible a death. That I am alive at this moment is due to you, and you only."

She turned pale to the very lips, and leant against a tree for support. She looked like a picture against the dark trunk and shining green leaves, which set off her delicate complexion and fair colouring.

"Ah!" with a little catch in her voice. "Don't speak of it.



The whole thing was too dreadful. It is some like hideous dream branded upon one's memory."

"Andrine," he said nervously, "I want to ask you something."

"Well," almost inaudibly. "What is it?"

"Would you—would you have cared if I had died?" . . .

Her bosom heaved, and her lip began to tremble, but she made no answer. It seemed so difficult to do so, when he apparently expected the first confession of love to come from her. And she wasn't even sure if this revolution going on within her *was* love.

Her silence piqued Harry, and made him feel he must provoke a reply of some sort.

"What induced you to go to those stones?" he asked.

"I don't know. The idea came to me all of a sudden."

"It was sheer madness on your part. If you had made the least slip, you would have fallen into the water."

"Very likely, but I could not stop to think of that. There was no time to feel afraid for oneself, and some inward power urged me on."

"An inward power, Andrine? Oh, what was that power?" And in his eagerness he drew a step nearer.

She put up her hands to her throat, as if trying to loosen the collar that encircled it.

"How can I tell?" she said simply. "I have never felt anything like it before."

His heart sounded like a pump in his ears, so agitated were its beatings.

"Was it—was it *love*, think you?"

A long pause succeeded. She looked dreamily out into the valley, where a soft, blue mist was rolling in from the Fjord.

"Was it?" he repeated impatiently, his eyes shining with the strong passion that consumed him.

"I—I don't know." And so saying, she plucked a leaf from its stem, and began tearing it to pieces.

The answer disappointed him intensely. Somehow or other he had expected a very different one, and now all his hopes were dashed to the ground.

Strange, incomprehensible girl! Should he never succeed in understanding her?

In the revulsion of feeling that ensued, he turned away, and did not even look at Andrine's face. If he had, he might have seen with tolerable clearness how its tremulous expression

and changing colour belied the speaker's words. But like a hasty young fool he took offence, and never gave the maiden credit for being abashed at the warmth of her emotions, or of being so inexperienced that she needed some little time to realise what they meant.

They relapsed into silence, and did not utter another word until Jens came up and told them the "Stolkjærre" and pony were waiting on the road. Then Harry carefully helped Andrine to get in, and drove her home, Jens occupying a seat at the back.

When Frue Velsine saw the trio returning in this unaccustomed fashion, and at so early an hour, she came running out to meet them in a great state of alarm.

"Is anything wrong?" she inquired breathlessly, looking anxiously at Andrine's pale face.

"No," said Harry, "but there might have been. Your daughter has had a fright, which caused her to faint, and she is not feeling quite herself in consequence."

"A fright? What was it about?"

"The ropes that held the boat broke whilst I was fishing the Opperr Fos pool. I had a most narrow escape from drowning; and should be a dead man at this moment, had it not been for Fröken Velsine's courage and presence of mind."

Whereupon he related the whole story to the fond mother, who, when it was ended, folded her daughter in her arms and burst into tears.

"Bless you, my girl!" she sobbed. "You have proved yourself to be your father's own child, and I cannot possibly bestow any higher praise than that. But now come in and rest."

Andrine, for once, appeared agitated, and moved from her customary calm. She followed her mother obediently into the house, and although Harry would fain have lingered, he saw that his presence was not required, and reluctantly wended his way home accompanied by Jens.

A great surprise awaited him there—so great a one that it well-nigh took away his breath. As he neared the red-roofed cottage wherein he dwelt, he perceived a tall man standing on the porch outside. At first he took him for Herr Christian, but a closer inspection, proved, to his unutterable astonishment, that it was no less a person than Mr. Smutch, who advanced to meet him with a jaunty air, and smile of assurance. Harry's amazement expressed itself on his face, and something, perhaps,

even less gracious than surprise may have appeared there, for to tell the truth, he was none too pleased at his quondam friend's turning up in this unceremonious and unexpected fashion.

Since he had parted from Mr. Smutch, his feelings in regard to that gentleman had undergone a very decided alteration. He no longer looked upon him as an Admirable Crichton, to be copied in every particular, and a few of his faults had become perfectly patent.

Clever as Ebor undoubtedly was, especially where his own self-interest was concerned, he had made the mistake of being over-confident in himself, and of under-rating Harry's abilities. He reckoned that if he drew the cord pretty tight round the bear's neck, the bear would submit, with nothing worse than a growl or two, to the touch of the master hand.

Possibly such calculations might have proved correct had it not been for Mr. Smutch's illness, but that event upset his plans in more ways than one. Although scarcely conscious of the fact, Harry had already begun to fret under Ebor's yoke before he left England; and no sooner was he fairly emancipated from the crushing influence of his friend's presence than a veil seemed to drop from his eyes.

When he arrived at Sandéthal, he was to a great extent disillusioned, and sundry revelations appertaining to the river, made at odd times by Jens, completed the work of disenchantment very effectually.

But perhaps what altered his state of feeling towards Mr. Smutch more than anything else, was a conviction which had grown upon him, owing to one or two remarks of Andrine, that Ebor, in some manner or other, had contrived to insult her. He knew Herr Ve'sine refused to receive him inside his house, and for so kind and hospitable a man to show discourtesy towards a stranger, there must have been some excellent reason. Besides all this—though being a meaner thought Harry tried to discard it—there really was not enough fishing for two rods. He and Andrine could manage nicely between them; they were willing to give and take, whereas Mr. Smutch's appearance on the scene would completely alter the existing arrangements which up till now worked so smoothly and harmoniously.

These things flashed through Harry's mind, and if he had been guilty of the rudeness of speaking out honestly, Ebor was just about the last person in the world he wished to see under present conditions.

His thoughts were full of Andrine; he could think of no one else, and at the sight of Mr. Smutch it occurred to him that all his delightful *tête-à-tête* by the river side would now have to come to an end.

There would be no more duets in future, only trios, and they were horrid things, satisfactory to no one.

A dim presentiment of evil stole over his spirit, an uncomfortable sense of something unpleasant about to take place, which prevented him from greeting his former friend with any warmth.

"Halloa! old chappie," exclaimed Mr. Smutch, shaking him vigorously by the hand. "What's the matter? You look as scared as if you'd seen a ghost. Didn't you get my letter?"

"No; what letter?" rejoined Harry, by a desperate effort trying to infuse some small show of cordiality into his voice and manner.

"Why, the one I wrote to you before I left England. Directly I heard of the luck you had had in landing a thirty-seven pound fish, I made up my mind to join you without delay."

"Very good of you, I'm sure," murmured Harry sarcastically.

Mr. Smutch gave him a sudden look, and the pupils of his dark eyes contracted unpleasantly.

"You see you had asked me so often and so pressingly that I felt certain there was no need to stand on ceremony. However, the letter must have gone astray, since I wrote by the last mail to tell you I should arrive to-day."

"I never received it, which is very strange," said Harry, "and had not the faintest notion you intended honouring me with a visit. I'm afraid you won't get much fishing. The river's awfully low, and Jens says he scarcely ever remembers so bad a salmon year."

"Oh! never mind," returned Mr. Smutch confidently. "I daresay I shall pull out a few fish."

He was not slow to perceive the coolness of Harry's manner. To tell the truth, he had expected a much warmer reception, and inwardly was extremely indignant and disappointed; but he was not a person to show what he felt easily, more especially when it appeared to his interest to take no notice.

He only garnered any slights, real or fancied, up in his memory, and made a mental note to pay them back with interest, whenever he got the opportunity. The best of the London season was over, a considerable number of his friends

hailed the scarlet fever as a most convenient excuse to fight shy of him, and his creditors had been unusually troublesome. Taking all these things into consideration, Mr. Smutch opined that a change of air would be decidedly beneficial; added to which, a letter received from Harry, containing a graphic account of the capture of his monster fish, had aroused his jealousy in no common degree. He made up his mind to go to Sandéthal at once, and try if he also could not succeed in catching a thirty-seven pound salmon.

Whether he was likely to be welcome or not was a matter of entire indifference to him. It suited him to leave Town, and he only consulted his own convenience in the matter. It might, too, be as well to keep an eye upon Harry, but he was hardly prepared to find his influence so greatly undermined in the short time that had elapsed since they parted. It set him wondering what the cause could be, and whilst he pretended to keep up a fluent conversation on a variety of different subjects, his thoughts were wandering in sundry directions, searching after a clue to the mystery.

He came to the conclusion that Harry must have heard something to his disadvantage. There were one or two ugly tales afloat, of which he was disagreeably conscious, but so great was his confidence in himself, that with a little trouble, he fully expected, now he was once more on the spot, to re-occupy the same place as formerly in his friend's good graces. He believed that he could bend him like a willow, and render him entirely subservient to his will.

Unfortunately for Mr. Smutch, the few weeks of independence enjoyed by Harry had done a great deal to strengthen his character. Love, too, had wonderfully sharpened his perceptions, and turned him from a weak, good-natured, easily-led boy into a man, with a tolerably clear knowledge of right and wrong.

He recognised this change in himself, for jokes at which he would have laughed formerly, now jarred terribly on his ears, and appeared not only extremely coarse, but also wholly destitute of wit, whilst Mr. Smutch's light, loose way of talking about women, made his blood boil with indignation. He could hardly sit still and hear the sex to which his pure, beautiful Andrine belonged spoken of in so scornful and slighting a manner. As if she were an inferior being, only created for man's pleasure!

As the evening wore on, and they sat discussing a bottle of



claret together, he several times felt an almost irresistible inclination to punch his friend Ebor's head. He wondered what he had ever seen in the man, and how he could have been foolish enough to admire such a cool, impudent fellow. And yet only a few weeks had gone by since he had entertained a profound veneration for his present companion, whose faults he now saw so clearly.

Meantime Mr. Smutch was, or pretended to be, perfectly at his ease. He took it for granted that Harry was delighted to see him, and condescendingly declared he looked forward to having a very jolly time of it. Indeed, he even discussed certain arrangements which would enable him to remain at Sandéthal as long as did his host.

Once or twice Harry tried to allude to the river, and to intimate that Ebor had behaved far from well about it, but Mr. Smutch, on each occasion, dexterously avoided the subject.

He resembled a snake in the grass, always ready to twist and turn, full of subterfuge and expedient, and presenting so many slippery fronts to the enemy, that it was next to impossible for any honest man to tackle him fairly. Shocking as the fact may sound, Truth stands but a poor chance when opposed to Falsehood. Truth is rigid, and not nimble enough to follow the tortuous shifts to which Deceit has recourse. She stands firmly on one spot, whilst Deceit trips merrily round and round, and by cunning ingenuity frequently gains a quite undeserved advantage.

Harry gave up attempting to express his opinions. He found it perfectly useless, and although he knew Mr. Smutch had cheated him, he was forced to forego the satisfaction of telling him so to his face.

That gentleman maintained a placid demeanour, but he secretly felt that the relations between himself and Harry had undergone a total transformation, and chafed at the discovery. Whereas Harry was now civil, but nothing more, he had formerly been friendly to the verge of "gush."

"I bet there's a woman at the bottom of it," growled Mr. Smutch, sotto voce, behind his thick moustache, "but who the devil can he have been making up to here? There's not a decent looking girl in the place. Wait a bit though. I was forgetting." And he mused for a second or two. "Ah! I have it. What a fool I am to be sure! She was a pretty little thing last year—unformed and ignorant to a degree, but nevertheless pretty—and that young milk-sop, Hopperton, is

sure to admire her namby-pamby, butter-won't-melt-in-my-mouth style of beauty. No doubt her father has been concocting some fine stories about me, and Jens too is a regular old woman, though I don't care twopence what he says. However I shall make it my business this evening to find out exactly how the land lies. As for Hopperton's marrying the girl—though I don't suppose even he would be such a fool as to think of such a thing seriously—of course that's out of the question. I shouldn't allow it. It wouldn't suit my book at all, and would put a regular extinguisher on the nice little plans I have formed for this winter. Times are so infernally bad just now, I shan't be able to hunt, unless I get hold of some flat to pay the piper."

Thus meditating, Mr. Smutch helped himself to another of Harry's cigars, which were a very superior brand to his own; and from behind a cloud of smoke watched him stealthily, much as a tiger eyes the unsuspecting prey he is preparing to spring upon.

Harry began to find the atmosphere of the room stifling. The truth was that Mr. Smutch with his coarse, common-place, London gossip, and records of fashionable improprieties, seemed to bring an impure air into the place. The stories he told with such gusto appeared horribly out of harmony with the still, beautiful Fjord, lying so soft and silvery in the moonlight, with the desolate mountains wrapped in their nocturnal purple robes, and above all, with the deep, true love possessing his spirit. They appeared to him to desecrate Love, that pure and holy passion which had already worked such changes within his breast, and was rapidly teaching him to venerate things simple and real, rather than those artificial and false.

What was it to him, whether Mr. A. had run away with Mrs. B., or Mr. B. had flirted with Mrs. C.? Even the amours of Royal Princes seemed of very little moment. The pleasures of the vicious Metropolis had faded from his memory in this peaceful valley. It was so quiet, so out of the world. He found his delight now, in looking into Andrine's clear eyes, and feeling that the inexpressibly sweet and soothing influences of Nature were casting a spell around them both. To sit by the river-side, to see the hurrying stream, the fair green grass, the fluttering leaves, the magnificent hills, and the great arch of serene blue sky overhead, was worth all the Rotten Rows, the Hurlinghams, the dinners, and the balls put together. Not a

single fashionable entertainment afforded such real pleasure as he had experienced during his stay in Norway.

Since he came to Sandéthal he had learnt a good deal, besides learning to dislike and distrust Mr. Smutch. He had seen the charm of honesty, kindness and content, even when unaccompanied by wealth; he had been taught to value true politeness, goodness of heart, and real, unaffected amiability. He had witnessed peasants toiling from morning till night, and yet not grumbling at their lot; he had found intelligent men, able to exist without luxury and perpetual excitement; and women, tender, loving, homely, brave, who united all the finest qualities of their sex. Far away, in a little Norwegian valley, he had discovered unsuspected virtues, which made *him* feel himself to be the uncivilized, the ignorant, and inferior. The cheerful simplicity of the Velsine family had produced a permanent impression upon his mind. He saw wherein their home differed from his own, and in how many essential points it excelled. Personally, he felt every way better for having known father, mother, and daughter, and his chief regret at Mr. Smutch's presence was, that, in future, he should be unable to see so much of the new friends whose lives and example were to him like a great, moral lesson, infinitely touching and beautiful.

He tossed away the end of his cigar—Mr. Smutch was in the midst of a long story about some naughty lady of title—and went and looked out of the window. He felt as if he could not endure this odious tittle-tattle, which, to his now unaccustomed ears, sounded both mean and mischievous.

The night was very still, and the moon, shining full on the ash tree overhanging the porch, lit up its long, delicate leaves until they resembled a trellis of silver, through which the deep, indigo sky peeped faintly. The softness of evening rested upon the great mountains, on the glancing river, and smooth, glassy Fjord. How beautiful they looked, how silent and serene!

His heart swelled suddenly, and a yearning that was half pain, half pleasure filled his being with melting tenderness. "Andrine, Andrine," his soul called out. "Oh! my beloved, to have you near me always, and to know that hereafter, when our bodies lie under the ground, we still shall be together. Does not my love produce some answering chord? Darling, can you not try to like me a little?"

So absorbed was he, that he utterly forgot Mr. Smutch's presence, and, opening the window wide, he leant his elbows on

the sill, lost in dreamy contemplation of the exquisite scene beneath him.

His thoughts were pure and good. Let no one laugh at them. Why should a man feel ashamed because his whole soul softens at the sight of the world's beauty, and because the darkening night with its yellow moon, its radiant stars, and peaceful influences, conjures up in the human breast a vague but boundless longing for love and sympathy?

Love and Sympathy, are not they what we all, even the strongest and bravest, crave for in the rare moments when we are our best and truest selves. In the moments when selfishness, worldly interests and ambitions appear to us poor, unsatisfying things, and with hungry longing we turn to Love as the nearest embodiment of happiness possible on earth.

Harry was by no means perfect. He was far removed from the ideal hero, and our readers may once or twice have accused him of weakness and inconstancy, but his affection for Andrine was real, and hallowed him. By its aid, he reached heights to which he otherwise would never have attained.

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

### MR. SMUTCH RESOLVES TO SAVE THE SITUATION.

MR. SMUTCH's basilisk eyes were fixed upon his host, and his face assumed an angry, scornful expression.

"H'm," he said to himself discontentedly. "Gazes out of the window and stares at the moon as if he had never seen it before. I'd lay a pony the damned ass is in love. Every symptom of the disease appears to me to be present, and I ought to know them pretty well by this time, considering what experience I have had. But I'll just put a few leading questions, so as to find out for certain how the land lies."

Thus resolving, and desirous of taking Harry off his guard, he said without further preliminary:

"Seen anything of the Velsines, Hopperton, since you have been here?"

Harry started and turned red. An instinctive feeling warned him they were approaching dangerous ground.

"Yes, a certain amount," he answered, as nonchalantly as he could. "They seem very nice sort of people."

"Do you really think so!" said Mr. Smutch with a sneer.

"I shouldn't say so if I didn't."

"Well, that's odd."

"I don't see anything odd about it," returned Harry, nettled by his companion's offensive tone and manner.

"Indeed! The girl is not a bad little thing in her way, I'll admit. She's a fair enough specimen of the rustic maiden who is charmingly innocent and ignorant, and who is as frightened of a man, as if he were a monster, but I can't stand the father and mother."

"May I ask why not?" inquired Harry, flushing up to the roots of his hair at hearing Andrine spoken of in this unceremonious fashion.

"Why not! Really, my dear Hopperton, I'm surprised at you asking the question. The father is, without exception, the most solemn, pompous, and intolerable old bore I ever came across; besides which, he is absolutely unacquainted with the customs and manners of polite society, and as for the mother—I verily believe that woman would talk a dog's hind leg off."

This was more than Harry could stand. Although he felt it was imprudent to take up cudgels on behalf of his friends, he could not sit still and hear them abused in this wholesale way.

"I suppose," he said hotly, "you consider Herr Velsine wanting in manners, because he had the good sense not to like yours, and disapproved of your treating his daughter as if she were some common little *grisette* out of the streets."

It was Mr. Smutch's turn to colour now. He had hoped that his disagreement with the sturdy Landsmand might not have reached Harry's ears—or at all events the cause—but as it had evidently done so, he determined to carry matters with a high hand. Besides, he had learnt what he wanted from Harry's impulsive speech, and knew the young man was in love with Andrine.

"Old fool," he exclaimed in tones of injured innocence. "I should like to punch his ugly, shock head. Nothing would give me greater pleasure. He seems to think that nobody can be two minutes in the fair Andrine's society without wanting to run away with her. The young woman is well enough to amuse oneself with, *faute de mieux*, especially as she has not the least objection to being admired, but that precious papa of hers happened to overhear one or two



compliments not meant for his ears, and, by Jove! if he didn't fly into a tremendous passion and forbid me the house. Just as if," with an ironical curl of his upper lip, which not even his heavy moustache could conceal, "I cared twopence about going there, and could not meet Andrine every day of my life by the river-side. Don't flatter yourself, my dear boy, that you are the sole recipient of her favours. Still waters run deep, and those sly, quiet, cat-like people are never to be trusted."

Harry took three strides into the middle of the room and looked Mr. Smutch full in the face.

"Listen to me, Smutch," he said sternly. "I have no wish to comment upon your conduct, though I have an idea that it was as bad as bad could be; but if you and I are to keep on speaking terms, and remain in the same house together, one thing must be distinctly understood. Do not dare to mention Miss Velsine's name again in a disparaging manner."

"Hoity-toity!" exclaimed Mr. Smutch derisively, though his sallow cheek flushed crimson. "What a fuss about nothing. The young woman is none the worse for any remarks I may have made."

"I don't care whether she is or is not, that has nothing to do with it. Moreover, I should not insult Fröken Velsine by believing a word of what you say. I know her pretty well by this time, and I know that she is not the girl to go meeting you or any other man promiscuously."

"Do you mean to tell me to my face, I have lied?"

"I make no statements," answered Harry, "though I reserve my own opinion on the subject. Only take warning. Leave An—I mean Miss Velsine, alone—that is to say, if you intend remaining at Sandéthal as my guest."

Mr. Smutch was intensely angry. He possessed an abominable temper, which often broke loose on much slighter provocation than he now considered he was receiving. His wrath had been accumulating ever since his arrival. It was maddening to feel that this creature, this puppet, who had been a mere tool in his hands, had managed to escape from his clutches. And that so highly unsatisfactory a result should be the work of a child of seventeen added fuel to the fire. His black eyes blazed with an evil light that boded no good to the object on which they rested. There was murder in his heart as he gazed at Harry.

"May I venture to inquire, Hopperton, if this pattern

young lady, this spotless and immaculate Andrine, has never met *you* by the river-side, just as she did me?"

"She goes there to fish," said Harry stoutly.

"Yes, and to flirt. You know that as well as I do. Deny it if you can."

Harry made no immediate reply. He was searching after the truth. Angry as Mr. Smutch's words rendered him, it had occurred to him lately that the girl came fishing more regularly than on his first arrival. The mere suspicion caused his heart to beat gladly, but then it was only a suspicion and required confirmation. Nevertheless it made him hesitate for a moment, and Mr. Smutch was quick to see the advantage he had gained.

"Ah!" he cried triumphantly. "Don't try and deceive me. I can read through the lines as well as most people. You've gone and made a mess of it directly you were left to your own devices."

"That depends very much on your definition of the word 'mess,'" retorted Harry coldly.

"You have fallen in love, like a young fool."

"Well, and if I have, what's that to you? Do you consider yourself authorized to dictate all my actions?"

"No, of course not. Pray don't get so excited, Hoperton."

"I'm not excited."

"Yes, you are, and as I happen to take an interest in you, if you wouldn't fly off at such a tangent I'd give you a little sensible advice."

"You're very good, Smutch, but I don't want it."

"So you imagine, but, as a matter of fact, you are in great danger of falling into an artfully-set trap. I suppose you fancy that that little minx really likes you, because she gives you every encouragement."

"It does not matter to you what I suppose."

"Thank you. That's very polite. But be careful what you are about, my dear fellow. I know for certain that both Frue and Fröken Velsine are dying to collar an Englishman."

"No such thing," interposed Harry indignantly. "Frue Velsine told me with her own lips that she hoped her daughter would marry a Norwegian, as she had done herself."

"Fiddle-de-dee. That's what she says to put you off the scent. Believe it or not, as you like, but the prudish Andrine flirted just as much with me last year, as, I'll take my oath, she's doing with you this. Pooh!" seeing an incredulous smile

pass over Harry's face. "Don't talk to me of her innocence and simplicity. She's wide awake and knows precious well what she's about."

"It's false. I don't believe a word of what you say," thundered his companion in reply, too angry to attempt to keep up appearances any longer. "You judge Andrine by your own low standard, and are not capable of appreciating the beauty and charm of her character."

Mr. Smutch laughed jeeringly, and looked at him with a sinister expression.

"Since you are so incredulous, Don Quixote, I shall be forced to give you some convincing proof of the truth of my words."

"I don't want any proof," said Harry vehemently. "It can do no good."

"Perhaps not, because you are afraid," sneered Mr. Smutch. "Wait till you see your dear Andrine desert you for me, that's all. You'll lower your tone a trifle then."

Harry glared at his tormentor in impotent rage, and, even as he looked at him, a horrible suspicion stole with maddening force into his brain. He could not help seeing that Mr. Smutch was undeniably handsome, in a coarse, showy style, well calculated to please some people. His bold, black eyes, swarthy complexion and drooping moustache, were precisely what an inexperienced young girl would admire, whose fancy was more likely to be taken by form and colour, than by expression. After all, there might be some truth in the swaggering fellow's threat.

There was no reason why Andrine should not prefer Ebor Smutch's society to his own. He—Harry—was painfully conscious that he had nothing in particular to recommend him. It would not be very difficult to eclipse him, especially as his love prevented him from appearing to advantage, and kept him shy and tongue-tied.

But the mere thought of his friend Ebor ingratiating himself in Andrine's good graces was exquisite torture. He knew the man well by this time, and he knew that he would as ruthlessly pluck a fair flower from its stem, detain it in the grasp of his strong, selfish hand, and then, when its beauty was destroyed, its purity defiled, cast it heedlessly away, as he would shoot a bird to the ground, or a rabbit to earth. He looked upon all women as fair game and entertained no high ideals of the sex, such as taught men to reverence and worship them.

The female quarry was only created, in his estimation, to be hunted and pulled down at will. All his instincts were cat-like and cruel. There was something feline in his nature which rendered it a delight to worry a creature to its destruction. He recognised no law, no code of honour, which forbade the pursuit.

And now that he had wormed Harry's secret from him, he not only determined to prevent his marrying Andrine, but also to enter the lists as his rival. If he could but succeed in making the girl fall in love with him, then all would be saved. He would keep her dangling on for a time until the danger was over, and if her affections were fairly engaged, pacify her by a promise of marriage some day, which, needless to say, he should never fulfil. He had no notion of throwing himself away upon a portionless Norwegian bride, quite incapable of advancing his interests; but he had not any objection to making up to her, if only for the fun of spiting Harry.

Thus he mused, and in a very few seconds his subtle brain had worked out every detail of the scheme. The beauty of it was, that if it succeeded, he should both humble and humiliate Hopperton, who was a regular garden ass, regain his former influence over him, and derive a certain amount of amusement from the whole proceeding into the bargain.

Andrine was decidedly pretty, and although not his style, quite good-looking enough to flirt with.

He looked forward, with positive pleasure, to making her cheek blush, and embarrassing her by a few of his liberal notions. If she were really as ignorant as she pretended to be, it would be great fun initiating her into the mysteries of life. Simple, pure-minded women were ridiculous anomalies in the nineteenth century. Nobody appreciated them. Men like Mr. Smutch are ever ready to pollute innocence; professing to despise a virtue which they do not possess, and cannot value. Of Andrine's willingness to fall in with his views he entertained no doubt. She might be a trifle coy at first, but he had a firm belief in his own powers of fascination, and flattered himself that he possessed a peculiar gift of subjugating women. Indeed he was under the impression that few could resist him.

His theory was, that they liked being taken by storm, and even committing little peccadilloes, which they groaned over afterwards, until their rosy mouths were silenced by a kiss. That was the proper way to manage matters. Once let the girl feel the man was master, and he could turn her round his

little finger. Sensible individuals never took any notice of the "Ah-buts," and "Oh-you-mustn'ts" with which their overtures were liable to be received. They meant absolutely nothing, and were a mere matter of form, meant to screen a woman's delighted vanity.

Then, too, Mr. Smutch rejoiced at the thought of lowering Herr Velsine's pride, and repaying him with interest for the affront he fancied he had received.

Altogether, by the time he went to bed, he argued himself round to a tolerable humour, and confidently looked forward to these fresh tactics entirely altering the situation. As for Harry, he summed him up as a weak young fool, and never gave his character credit for possessing any strong elements.

Clever people nearly invariably believe themselves to be so much more clever than they actually are, and think those with whom they come in contact so much more stupid. And this belief leads them into errors, from which diffident, but far less highly-gifted folk escape.

Too much self-confidence is as bad as none at all; for one little false move will upset the whole fabric, so carefully and elaborately planned, and send it crashing to the ground.

Harry retired to rest, feeling thoroughly miserable. Evil influences seemed closing around him, and as he vainly courted sleep, he wished to goodness Mr. Smutch had never taken it into his head to come to Sandéthal. He had an instinctive conviction that there was mischief brewing.

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## CHAPTER XXXVII.

### ANDRINE GETS ANGRY.

A WEEK passed away—a week which proved one of unmitigated misery to Harry.

The day after Mr. Smutch's arrival, Andrine appeared as usual by the river-side. She seemed greatly surprised to see him, and was evidently none too pleased by his presence; but he completely ignored any little coolness on her part, and immediately monopolizing the conversation, paid her a series of extravagant compliments, which she received partly in wonderment, partly in disapprobation. Their only effect was, to



make her feel extremely ill at ease ; but Mr. Smutch rattled on, heedless of the girl's embarrassment, and stuck to her like a leech.

He even pretended that he did not care to fish, and insisted on Harry doing all the flogging, much against his wish, by which means he artfully contrived to prevent him from being alone for one minute with Andrine.

Needless to say, Harry was furious, but he had to submit to Ebor's manœuvres, more especially as the young lady, since their last meeting, seemed to have developed a most painful and unaccountable fit of shyness, which caused her to blush every time their glances met. He construed this to mean that she wished to avoid him, and after one or two attempts to find out the reason, he settled down sullenly to the fishing.

One evening, Mr. Smutch informed him with great complacency, that he had had a good innings with Fröken Velsine ; but, oddly enough, the next day she did not appear, somewhat to his discomfiture, for he had been boasting pretty freely as to his success.

She stayed religiously at home, and neither of the two gentlemen caught even so much as a distant glimpse of her. This in itself was sufficient to render Harry very restless and unhappy, but when three whole, long days passed without Andrine's coming fishing, he grew perfectly wretched, and hardly knew how to contain himself.

On the fourth afternoon, when he had reached the lowest depths of woe, to his infinite joy he spied her blue skirts fluttering on the bridge where they had met so often. They were walking up to the higher reaches of the river, and Mr. Smutch was with him, but unable to repress his eagerness he hurried on ahead, leaving his companion to follow at a more leisurely pace.

"Andrine," he cried, calling her by the name familiar to his thoughts. "What an age it is since I have seen you. What has made you give up fishing?"

"I have not given it up, Mr. Hopperton," she replied, "or if I have, it is only for a time."

"For a time! Why should you give it up at all? Have we frightened you away?"

For a moment she let the blue radiance of her eyes flash straight into his own, with their clear, steady light, which told of a nature true as steel, honest as the day.

"*You* don't frighten me," she said softly, whilst a charmingly

demure smile lurked round the corners of her mouth, making him feel a mad desire to kiss it.

An indescribable thrill shot through his frame. For one second he could have sworn that she loved him, as he loved her, and his senses succumbed to the sweet intoxication of this belief.

He could just see a hot wave of colour rush up into Andrine's face, and dye it crimson, and then to his inexpressible disappointment, she dipped her parasol right over it, and said, in an altered voice:

"I hope you will not think me very rude if I tell you the truth, but I do not like your—friend."

"Do not call him any friend of mine," returned Harry, impetuously. "He has forced himself upon me, much to my annoyance."

"He told me that you had asked him to come."

"So I did, some weeks ago, before I found out what he was really like. I will be honest with you, Andrine. There was a time when I used to think well of Mr. Smutch. I did not know any better. Now—I have learnt wisdom, and I can't bear the very sight of him. It is torture to me to be boxed up with the fellow from morning till night, as I am now."

"Ah! I am glad you don't care for him," said Andrine, under her breath.

"I wish you would tell me something," rejoined Harry, abruptly. "Why do you dislike Mr. Smutch so much?"

"Because he is not good. My heart tells me so, and father says the same."

"Does he?"

"Yes, and he is so wise and so clever, that he is nearly always right."

"Who is not good, Fröken Andrine?" inquired Mr. Smutch's voice, immediately behind them.

They turned round with a guilty start, trying to glean from his face if he was aware that he, himself, had been the subject of conversation. But it wore an impenetrable expression.

The girl's sweet, modest, eyes fell before the bold stare fixed upon them.

"No—nobody," she muttered in confusion. "I was only making a remark to Mr. Hopperton."

"Oh! indeed. You seem to have a great deal to say to him always."

She blushed scarlet, but vouchsafed no reply to this observation. She only felt that she hated him, and yet, strangely enough, he possessed a horrible compelling power, which she was totally at a loss to account for, and which rendered her furious, not only with him, but also with herself. Why should this man, whom she feared and disliked, have any influence over her? Was it because she too was bad, and full of evil instincts, or was it because those glittering dark eyes of his were charged with a human magnetism stronger than her own?

Andrine knew not; she only knew that Mr. Smutch—great as was her aversion to him—fascinated her against her will, much as a poisonous serpent fascinates a poor little quivering bird.

"Well, you cruel beauty," he said reproachfully, taking her hand in his, and detaining it in spite of several embarrassed struggles to regain her freedom. "Where have you been hiding all this time?"

"I have not been hiding, and I am not a beauty," she answered with grave simplicity.

"Ho, ho! you must allow me to be the best judge of the latter statement; though I freely admit that your modesty does but add to your charms."

"Oh! Mr. Smutch," she exclaimed in great distress, wriggling under his persistent stare, and making another ineffectual attempt to withdraw her hand, especially as he was squeezing it in a most audacious fashion. "I do wish you would not say such things. They make me feel so—so—" breaking off short.

"So what?" he asked, with a coarse laugh.

"Uncomfortable," she returned, fairly goaded into speaking her thoughts, by the familiarity of his manner, which filled her with vague alarm, and made her heart beat more rapidly than its wont. "I am not used to being talked to in this way, or to being praised extravagantly for virtues I do not possess. And what is worse I never know whether you are laughing at me or not."

"Laughing at you! My dear, little Andrine, what an absurd idea! Surely you have not lived seventeen years in the world without becoming aware of the fact that you are exquisitely and superlatively beautiful. Your own looking-glass must tell you that much." And Mr. Smutch smiled seductively, for he had a great notion of "laying it on thick," as he termed the

process of cultivating and encouraging a woman's vanity. But he erred in treating all women alike, and in not distinguishing one type from another.

Andrine drew herself up with an offended air, and wrenched her hand from his grasp, by main force.

"You have no business to call me Andrine, or 'my dear.' I am a stranger to you, and you to me. Besides," looking up at him with an indignant gaze, "it is not nice. I do not like it. Good-bye, Mr. Smutch, I must be moving on."

"Hoity-toity!" he exclaimed banteringly. "How proper and dignified we are to be sure! Why, bless my heart alive, I shouldn't fly into a passion if you called me Ebor. On the contrary I give you full leave to do so."

"Thanks, I don't require your permission, and shall certainly not profit by it."

So saying, and with an appealing look at Harry, who stood by, gnashing his teeth with rage, she tried to pass on; but Mr. Smutch interposed his stalwart person, and blocked up the narrow bridge.

"You shan't go, until you tell me when you are coming out fishing again?" he said.

She cast a look of detestation at him. His ungentlemanly conduct roused her spirit.

"When am I coming again? Never, as long as you are here."

And with that she slipped past him, and was gone, before he had time to recover from the surprise occasioned by the strange reception afforded to his tender speeches.

He stood and looked blankly after her receding form. It seemed such an incredible thing that she should be neither pleased nor flattered by his advances. It passed his comprehension, for the women with whom he was accustomed to associate liked his clumsy compliments, and free and easy manners, giving back jest for jest, insolence for insolence.

"There," exclaimed Harry, furiously, as soon as Andrine was out of earshot. "You have gone and done it now."

"Done what?" inquired Mr. Smutch, with provoking calm, taking a fiendish delight in irritating his companion, and venting his own annoyance upon him.

"Why, driving Andrine away; and I have to thank you for making Fröken Velsine so angry that in future she will avoid us both like the pest."

"Pooh! not she. What a donkey you are to imagine that girls mean what they say. It's all done for effect."

"I don't believe it," said Harry despondently. "I only wish it were."

"It's a woman's way of leading a man on, and getting him up to the scratch," returned Mr. Smutch.

But in spite of this assertion, he began to entertain a few doubts on the subject, when a whole week went by and no thing more was seen of Andrine.

As for poor Harry, he spent seven days of cruel unrest, fancying his beloved was offended with him as well as with Mr. Smutch, and not daring to call at the house as usual when Sunday came round. Meantime, he could hardly bring himself to be civil to his former friend. Rightly or wrongly, he regarded him as the cause of all his troubles. He had been happy enough until he came, whilst, as ill-luck would have it, at the very moment when Andrine was drawing nearer to him, Mr. Smutch appeared on the scene, and immediately raised a barrier between them.

No wonder he owed him a grudge, and had great difficulty in preventing his smouldering wrath from bursting into an active flame. And besides all this, no sooner did Andrine give up coming to the river, than Mr. Smutch, with an utter want of consideration for his host, coolly appropriated all the best pools. Harry had one source of satisfaction during this miserable week. Ebor did not catch a single salmon, whilst he brought home three fine fish, hooking them in water which the other despised, and therefore allowed him to retain.

Mr. Smutch was rampantly jealous—so jealous that he could not hide his envy and mortification, which occasioned Harry much secret delight, though he said nothing.

But this was only a feeble ray of sunshine amid the deepening gloom. He was also conscious of his guest's endeavours to reduce him to his old condition of allegiance, and in his present state of mind they irritated him intensely.

Altogether there was a considerable degree of friction between the two men, which rendered their continued *tête-à-tête* anything but pleasant. Harry was a gentleman, and his notions of hospitality hindered him from quarrelling outright, but he suffered all the more, because, to a great extent, he suffered in silence.

Things were in this state when one afternoon Mr. Smutch announced his intention of not fishing as usual. His persistent ill-luck had rendered him less keen. It was Tuesday, the day on which the steamer called, and he declared that he had



several important letters to write, which had already been too long deferred.

Harry's heart beat gladly at the prospect of escaping from his gaoler and spending a few hours alone. He rejoiced like a child in getting off with Jens and leaving Mr. Smutch behind; whilst he cogitated a variety of plans by which he might let Andrine know that his guest had remained at home.

In spite of the brightness of the weather, he started immediately after their early dinner, intending to wait at the Bridge pool in case of Andrine appearing.

It was a curious day out of doors. The sun shone with intense heat, probing down into the very depths of the beflowered grass, which resembled a liliputian forest of light and shade. The trees looked lovely. Each leaf seemed to sparkle with a separate radiance that turned their delicate veins into threads of gold. But the air was heavy, and although a gentle breeze blew from the south-west, it brought no refreshment to the arid earth, from which, with its hot, close breath, it appeared to suck all the genial moisture. This strange sullenness and deadness of the atmosphere, contrasted forcibly with the sunny stillness of the valley and of the mighty hills, whose outlines were singularly clearly defined. The one occasioned a sense of oppression, the other of peace. The one robbed you of your vitality, the other rendered the mere fact of living a pleasure; so pure were the tints of earth and sky.

Looking north, the latter was cloudless, and of a faint, clear blue, charming to the eye to rest upon; but in the quarter from whence blew the wind it deepened in intensity, until the edges of the great, beautiful clouds that were gradually massing themselves together on the seaward horizon, shone out milky white against their deep, cerulean background.

Harry had no intention of beginning to fish immediately, and being forced to pass on to the upper water, very likely before Andrine came out, so he gladly made the sunshine an excuse to dally under a tall pine, whose fragrance the heat was extracting with great force.

"Too hot to fish just yet," he said to Jens, stretching himself out on the dry ground.

"Yes, too 'ot. Best vait bit," responded that estimable individual entering into his feelings with ready sympathy. "No need to be in a hast."

And so they sat down and waited, Harry longing for Andrine to appear, and starting at the least sound. He cogitated

whether he dared send a little pencil note to the house, requesting her immediate presence. He tore a sheet from an old letter he happened to have in his pocket, and wrote an urgent appeal, in which he represented his own misery and burning desire to meet again; but when he had written it, his heart failed him. He was so timid where she was concerned, and she might consider the message an impertinence, or it might fall into Frue Velsine's hands, which was not exactly desirable, or, worse than all, Andrine, even if she received it, might not care to come at his bidding.

He waited and waited, hoping against hope, with a fierce yearning at his heart, which grew more painful and desperate as the minutes glided by.

The sultriness of the day added to his depression, and the narrow valley lying basking in the sun's dazzling rays felt stifling.

Shut up between those great, grey prison walls, thousands of feet in height, and out of sight of the cool, green Fjord, the wind did not reach him. Over the whole landscape here hovered a brooding stillness—a breathless, airless quietude, which was suffocating and intolerable.

Nature resembled some beautiful malefactor, who gathers up her strength previous to striking a cruel blow, and who seeks to avert suspicion by her deceptive calm.

Usually the birds sang with passionate joy all along the banks of the river. Magpies chattered, thrushes throated. To day there was not one to be heard. A profound silence reigned everywhere, broken only by the booming of midges and mosquitoes, who danced around in exasperating numbers, seeming to delight in the oppressive atmospheric conditions.

And the mountains grew clearer and clearer, until Harry felt an irresistible inclination to stretch forth his hand and sweep them away. They produced the effect of a leaden weight upon the brain, and the sun shone more fiercely, and the blue sky deepened, until its radiance became marvellous to behold, and the beautiful clouds slowly sailed up from the horizon, their bases changed to a deep indigo, and their white edges shining like angels' robes.

Then Harry's spirit grew calmer, and looking upon the exceeding beauty of God's created earth, his soul seemed to expand, and he vowed that, even if Andrine's love were denied him, he would strive to prove himself worthy of the Almighty's complex and incomprehensible gift—Life.

High and noble impulses stirred within him, a belief that the pain of being, must be struggled with bravely and manfully, and a vague consciousness that endurance, suffering, and disappointment give birth to grander qualities than evoked by mere personal happiness.

The sublimity of Nature awoke a corresponding chord in his bosom, and roused thoughts both pure and unselfish. It was not easy to be petty and mean amidst the majestic scenery by which he was surrounded.

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## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

### STORMY LOVE-MAKING.

MEANWHILE, Mr. Smutch wrote his letters, and pondered discontentedly over the little progress he had made during the week. He was by no means satisfied with the situation, and was rapidly realising that Harry Hopperton was slipping farther and farther away from him. As regarded Andrine, his plans up to now had met with little success.

Time was getting on, and he felt that something must be done, and without delay. He was playing a losing game, but it was still within the limits of possibility that some lucky turn of the cards might redeem his fortunes.

As he sat by the round centre-table, nibbling the end of his penstick, he was a prey to very black thought. The weather depressed him, and he already felt dead sick of Sandéthal and its quiet, monotonous life.

Suddenly a ray of sunshine flashed across his mental gloom. It occurred to him, that if only he could succeed in meeting Andrine in Harry's absence, on this particular afternoon, it would be a fine opportunity to advance his interests. He could easily persuade Hopperton, they had not met by accident—that at the girl's instigation, he had purposely sent his friend to the river, and remained behind.

Such an assurance would inevitably arouse his jealousy, and engender a distrust of Andrine. This was exactly what Mr. Smutch wished, and if he could only come across her, his statements would have every appearance of truth. But how to do so? That was the question.

He dared not go boldly up to the house, or even run the risk of being found skulking around it, on account of Herr Velsine, whom he professed to despise, but nevertheless had no inclination to offend, still retaining a vivid impression of the indignant lecture he had received on the occasion of a former visit. The only hope lay in Andrine herself, and it was clear that, whether from shyness or coquetry, she had quite given up coming to the river. There could be no use in seeking her there. It was owing to this belief, that he had allowed Harry to start alone, and devoted himself to his correspondence.

Mr. Smutch finished his letters, stamped them, yawned, and looked out of the window. Unusual excitement! For once there was something to look at, since of course he did not count those perpetual hills, or that walled-in piece of water. The steamer was just arriving. He could hear the (to him) agreeable sound of the hoarse hooting as she slackened speed and neared the landing-stage. It reminded him that if the worst came to the worst, it was easy to effect an escape from this "infernal hole," as he mentally dubbed Sandéthal.

Suddenly he spied a woman's blue skirts fluttering along the dusty white road. His face lit up with a sinister smile, and in a moment he reached down his broad-brimmed straw hat, from the peg on which it hung in the lobby outside, and went out. The Fates were favouring him at last, though they had been an uncommonly long while about it. But now he perceived the very person who occupied his thoughts. He hurried off, and followed her at a respectful distance, in order to ascertain her movements. His wish was to have half-an-hour's conversation with her alone, and either bully, coerce, or cajole her into his power. To achieve this end, spectators were not desirable. It would require perfect solitude. His object was to surprise her in some lonely spot, out of reach of the prying eyes of the villagers, where, if it were necessary to put on the screw a bit, she could not escape from him or secure assistance. It was a meritorious project, worthy of Mr. Smutch.

Somewhat to her pursuer's disappointment, Andrine made straight for the landing-stage, where a goodly number of peasants were, as usual, congregated.

Mr. Smutch therefore continued to loiter, so that she might not be aware of his vicinity, taking care, however, not to lose sight of her altogether. Presently she stepped on board and apparently asked some question of the captain, which he seemed

to answer in the negative, for, with a slight gesture of disappointment, she moved away and regained the shore.

Was she going straight home? If so, she would encounter Mr. Smutch, and he would be forced to accost her in full view of the villagers and at a disadvantage.

No. To his intense satisfaction she turned to the left and walked swiftly along a narrow path which led to the church, and the priest's house beyond. This path wound round the base of the highest mountain in the whole neighbourhood, clinging close all the way to the Fjord that lay stretched like a clear, green mirror some hundred feet beneath it. Sheer and straight from the water's edge rose the great, frowning precipice, with its weather-worn sides and deep indented fissures, in which grew patches of lichen, but neither flowers nor grass.

To cut this path from the solid rock, and to clear away the mass of loose boulders and rubble, which at odd times had slipped down from the lofty, snow-crowned heights above, must have been a work of immense labour, requiring indomitable patience and perseverance. Perhaps this accounted for its extreme narrowness. Two people could with difficulty walk abreast upon it.

It went by the name of the "Elsker gang" or Lovers' Walk, and frequently on a Sabbath evening, some tender and innocent betrothed couple would wander there hand in hand, and with the semi-conscious appreciation of long custom, look out upon the quiet Fjord, and the mighty hills opposite.

The path was about a mile in length, and ended abruptly when it reached the priest's house, that was built in a kind of ravine, probably scooped out by an ancient moraine, hemmed in by walls of solid rock, which widening towards the Fjord, permitted some cultivation on an exceedingly diminutive scale. It shone out one vivid spot of green, amid all that vast and stony desolation. Andrine walked on with a buoyant step, unconscious of the dastardly spy dogging her footsteps. Mr. Smutch, following in her wake, drew up the plan of campaign with the rapidity of an old general, or a young politician. He surmised that she was going to call at the priest's house probably with some slight offering, a few fresh eggs, a chicken, lettuces or flowers, since she carried a little basket in her hand. He determined, therefore to wait until she had done her errand, and when she turned her face towards home, and rounded a certain corner, which effectually shielded anyone treading the lonely path from vision, pounce down upon the



innocent and unsuspecting girl, trusting from her very confusion to glean an advantage.

He did not deliberately propose to ruin Andrine, but he greatly desired to damage her reputation, and entangle her in such a manner that Harry would repent of his infatuation, and become a wiser if a sadder man.

This was what Mr. Smutch told himself he intended doing. Unfortunately, intentions, good and bad, like most things in this world, are liable to be influenced by circumstances. A sudden wave of passion will disarrange the most prudent scheme, especially when made by a man of Mr. Smutch's sensual temperament.

Meanwhile, Andrine stepped lightly up to the priest's house, and disappeared within its doors.

Mr. Smutch chose a convenient point of observation behind a rock, and waited.

He, like Harry, was affected by the languor and heaviness of the atmosphere, and although not given to noticing such things, he could not help observing the strange appearance presented by the sky.

Looking towards the head of the Fjord, and up the valley, all was brightness and radiance. The specks of cottages, the rushing river, the various trees whose foliage decked the banks, the tiny fields, and crops of corn, lay basking in brilliant sunshine whose hot, golden rays made the very air quiver. The sky above, stretched blue and calm; but turning towards the south-west, great masses of purple-black clouds were accumulating, and pushing slowly upwards from the horizon.

Their outlines were marvellously luminous and transparent, sending translucent streamers down to the hill-tops; but, as little by little they clustered round, and closed in upon the dazzling orb that held so proud a sway in the heavens, they quenched its glory, like some stern, relentless foe, who in cold blood takes the life of his enemy. For a brief space, the brave sun tried to struggle through their sombre vapours, and then he hid his face altogether. One against so many, the combat could not be sustained.

But his withdrawal caused a miraculous change to come over the scene. All the gay, beautiful tints that had adorned the landscape, and lent it such exquisite colouring, faded as at the touch of a magician's wand. Greyness, uniform and sad, took their place; whilst at the same time, a solemn hush descended upon earth and water—a hush not peaceful, but awesome in

its nature. The stupendous mountains, which only a few seconds ago had appeared almost white, thanks to the penetrating rays that flooded their barren sides with sunshine, now wore an inky hue, whilst their sable shadows, seeming to dive far into the Fjord, made it resemble a sheet of polished ebony. The stillness was something awful, producing an unconquerable feeling of depression. Inch by inch the great, black, thunderous clouds gained upon the clear, blue sky, as if, not satisfied with one conquest, they were bent on making another. Meanwhile, their edges lost the beautiful, pearly tints that had hitherto characterized them, gleamed with a lurid light, which caused a strange, unearthly glare. A far-off peak caught the reflection and stood wrapped, as it were in flame, rendering the darkness of its neighbours still more sombre and weird.

"H'm," muttered Mr. Smutch to himself, unconsciously watching these phenomena. "It looks like dirty weather. I'd lay a fiver there's a storm brewing. It's to be hoped that chit of a girl won't keep me waiting much longer, else we shall both get a wet jacket for our pains. Little prude! She wants a good livening up, and by Jingo, she shall have one."

Just as he said the words, Andrine reappeared, tripping lightly along the path. It was no part of Mr. Smutch's plan to be caught playing the spy, therefore he immediately rose from the flat stone on which he had been seated, and keeping the rocks steadily between them, walked twenty yards or so in the direction of Sandéthal. He then wheeled about and retraced his footsteps, so as to give the impression that he had only quite recently arrived on the spot. As soon as Andrine turned the corner, and came fairly in sight, he boldly advanced to meet her.

"Hulloa!" he exclaimed in well simulated accents of surprise. "This is indeed an unexpected pleasure. I began to despair of ever meeting you again. The river has been a very dreary sort of place without you to enliven it."

"It was your own fault that I stayed away, Mr. Smutch," she said coldly, pretending not to notice his outstretched hand, for which he swore at her inwardly.

"My fault! Ah! I see you are as cruel as ever, and are still offended at the foolish things I said the other day. That is neither kind nor just. Is it my fault that you are beautiful, and that I can't help thinking you so?"

"You may think what you like," she answered gravely. "I can't prevent your thoughts, however unwise they may be, but

what I have a right to expect, is that you should not pay me fulsome compliments to my face, when you know perfectly well how much I detest them."

And Andrine drew herself up, and looked very straight and dignified.

"Andrine," he sighed. "You are awfully hard upon me. I wish to goodness you understood me a little better, then perhaps you would not take a delight in distorting my words, and putting all sorts of unkind constructions on them. Have you no feelings, that you seem as if you could not sympathize with people when they are in love?"

Andrine crimsoned, and her full white lids drooped till they almost hid her eyes. His words raised a strange tumult within her breast. She knew in her own consciousness that she sympathized with some people, although not with him. Mr. Smutch's sentiment seemed to have a false ring about it, very different from that of somebody else of her acquaintance.

"I promised my mother I would return early. Will you please let me pass," she said with growing embarrassment.

"You seem in a great hurry. May I not even be allowed to walk with you a little way? I am not an ogre, though you appear to think me one."

This observation was made with so much apparent concern, and Mr. Smutch managed to infuse such a tone of sadness into his voice, that Andrine, being young and inexperienced, also soft-hearted and easily touched, relented. Perhaps, after all, she had been a little too hard upon him. The devil is not always quite as black as he is painted.

"I would rather walk alone," she said, with the child-like outspokenness that was one of her chief characteristics, "but since you are also going in the direction of Sandéthal, I cannot hinder you from accompanying me."

This was quite permission enough for Mr. Smutch. He did not mind its ungraciousness.

"Thank you very much," he said gratefully. "There are so many things I wish to talk to you about and explain. Your father has taken a dislike to me——"

"My father never takes a dislike to anyone without cause," she interrupted. "He is too good and too just."

"Possibly. We need not discuss that point. It is sufficient that the fact remains, and the consequence of Herr Velsine's goodness and justice is, I am debarred from seeking your society."

"There is no occasion to seek it, Mr. Smutch. You can fish."

"Ah! Andrine, you must not be angry if I try to make the most of the rare opportunities afforded me. As I said before, you are too cold to understand the nature of my passion."

She turned and looked at him in surprise, and as his bold, bright eyes met hers a sudden dread stole into her heart.

"Let us make haste," she said, pointing to the sky. "This is no time to stop and talk. We are going to have very heavy rain, and," glancing at her blue and white skirt, "I have left my waterproof at home."

Even as she spoke, the death-like silence gave place to a mysterious sighing and moaning, and suddenly the wings of the wind were unloosed, and a blast of hot air came sweeping down the Fjord, which broke up the glass-like water into a myriad ripples. Almost immediately it was succeeded by a black squall, which lashed the ripples into waves. Then, first one great drop, then another dropped down from the sullen clouds, that resembled a black cope overhead, parted here and there by wild rents of blue, until the whole surface of the Fjord was slapped into little holes and white splashes. With such force did the rain descend, and with such a fierce tropical violence, that in a very minutes they would have been wet to the skin.

Not many yards ahead, an enormous boulder had fallen about two months ago, and so blocked the path that it was necessary to climb up the mountain side in order to get round it. This boulder had only rolled a few feet from its original resting-place, which was concave, and formed a slight protection against the fury of the elements. Andrine ran to take shelter there, followed by her companion, whose movements were less agile.

And now the storm burst in full fury. It had been gathering all day, and the air was charged with electricity. It began by a clap of thunder of startling loudness, that reverberated far and wide. From mountain to mountain echo, echoed echo in a magnificent roar of sound, till it seemed as if the whole of Heaven's artillery were unloosed. Then followed a dazzling flash of lightning, so fierce, so vivid, that with a cry of terror, Andrine shielded her eyes with her hand, trying, but in vain, to shut out the brilliant, forked flame, which appeared to rend the firmament in twain, and leave the gates of Paradise exposed. A darkness, as of night, succeeded this momentary illumination. And then, down came the rain in torrents, and the wind arose

in all its boisterous might, and raged over the dark surface of the Fjord, till it was flecked with foam, like a noble steed ridden by a too impetuous master. The sullen mutterings of the thunder could still be heard grumbling among the mountains, and before they had died away, another peal, even louder than its predecessor, made the whole air vibrate. It was followed, almost instantaneously, by an electric uplighting, grand, but infinitely terrible. The zigzag lightning appeared to strike the very rock beneath which they stood, and for a moment to envelope them in its life-destroying brightness. They could even fancy they felt its burning breath consuming them.

Andrine trembled and turned pale. She was so frightened she did not realize at first that Mr. Smutch had contrived to insinuate his arm round her waist, or that while the clouds clashed, and the lightning flashed, he kept murmuring reassuring words in her ear.

By this time she was wet to the skin. Their place of refuge, though the best to be obtained at such short notice, was a very indifferent one. The pitiless rain beat straight into their faces, as it came driving up the Fjord, and already countless little rivulets tricked down from the rock at their backs.

"Andrine," whispered Mr. Smutch, "don't be alarmed, my darling. Surely you must know that you are safe with me."

She turned a pair of terrified blue eyes upon him. Their expression was like a hunted hare's. Then, becoming conscious of the fact that he held her as she had been held by no man save her father, an indignant flush mounted to her fair face, and she exclaimed vehemently:

"Oh, this is too bad! It is persecution—worse, cowardly and unmanly, to take advantage of a defenceless woman, whom circumstances has placed in your power, against her own free will. Mr. Smutch, if you have one spark of gentlemanly feeling in you, I implore you to leave me alone."

"Leave you alone, my pretty dear! Unfortunately, that is just what I can't do."

"You must—you shall!" she cried passionately, struggling like a wounded bird in his grasp.

"Those are ugly words, Andrine. They don't sound well, even from your rosy lips."

"How dare you call my lips rosy?"

"Because they are," he laughed in reply, infinitely amused by the simplicity of her wrath. "They are like two little rose-buds, dewy and fresh."



"Rubbish!"

"Ah! what matter whether I talk rubbish or not? It is sweet to talk rubbish to a pretty girl, whose modesty makes her fancy she dislikes you."

"Dislikes you! That is too mild a word. I *hate* you!" And Andrine's whole frame shook with passionate loathing.

"Softly, softly. You'd better keep a civil tongue in your head, or it will be all the worse for you in the long run. Come, Andrine, be sensible, and resign yourself to circumstances. Why should you behave so unkindly? This storm, of which you seem afraid, gives me my opportunity. I should be a fool not to profit by it, and lovely maidens like yourself must pay the penalty of their good looks."

She drew in her breath with a sharp, hissing sound, and a kind of unnatural courage came to her aid. Bravely she tried to resist the glamour of those disagreeable, yet magnetic eyes.

"I—I am not afraid of the storm any longer. It was foolish of me to be frightened by it, when I am threatened, so help me God, by such a far more terrible danger."

"Ha, ha! Do you call me a terrible danger? For shame, Andrine, for shame! That is not a nice way to speak of one who is desperately in love with you, and who would lay down his life to serve you."

She burst into tears.

"I don't believe it. You are not really in love with me. You can't be, or you would not take such an odious way of showing your affection."

"Why is it odious?"

"Oh, you must know what I mean. I—I can't explain. It is so dreadful." And she sobbed aloud, with a cruel sense of outraged dignity, as he tightened his pressure upon her waist.

"Nonsense!" he said, with an ugly frown, making his swarthy face look dark as night. "The fact is, you have been shut up in this infernal valley so long that you are a regular little nun. Listen to me, child. I wish you well, and I will take you away from here, to great, gay, pleasure-loving London, where you will be happy for the first time in your young life, and not know what it is to feel dull. You shall have beautiful dresses to wear, jewels to clasp round your arms and neck—every woman loves jewels, and will sell her soul for them. I will introduce you to my friends, and let your beauty be seen, instead of shutting you up like a dog in the manger."

The pupils of Andrine's large eyes dilated with horror, and

an expression of unutterable disgust stole over her face, and yet she scarcely understood what he proposed. She knew so little of the world and its ways.

For a moment, as he looked at her fair, childish loveliness, a sentiment almost approaching to shame crept through Mr. Smutch's being. The next, he stifled it sternly, and laughing at his own weakness, clasped her to him with sudden passion, for her resistance and her beauty inflamed his senses.

"Little one," he murmured, stooping his dark head to hers, "you must not be so coy. Let me teach you that you are no longer a baby, but a grown-up woman, with a right to taste life's sweetness. Give me a kiss. I ask for nothing more, and kissing does not hurt."

"Never!" she shrieked, in palpitating defiance. "Rather than yield to the wish of so bad and evil-hearted a man, I would fling myself down into the Fjord at my feet, and die!"

He gave a mocking laugh, and held her still tighter, so that she might realize his strength and her feebleness.

"No, you don't. You are in my power, and I would not allow you to commit any action half so idiotic. Now, listen to reason, Andrine. You are very pretty, and I like you. I have no desire to use force, but, at the same time, if you won't give me a kiss when I ask for it civilly, I must take it."

And, in spite of the piercing screams of the terrified girl, he once more advanced his lips to hers. A blinding flash caused him instinctively to loose his hold. It wrapped them in a sheet of flame, which made Mr. Smutch's passionate face turn red, then pale. At the same moment, a noise, louder a thousand times than any thunder, nearer and fuller of deadly significance, burst right over their heads.

"Good God! What is that?" he ejaculated in a hoarse whisper.

Before Andrine could make any reply, a cold blast of air came sweeping by; and, crashing, leaping, scattering—huge fragments of rock, shattered into a thousand pieces by the lightning, rushed down like living things, seeking whom they could destroy, and hurled them violently to the ground.

There they lay, there they fell; with the wild wind sighing around them, and the cold rain washing their up-turned faces, whilst the dark sky looked down callous and indifferent, and the elements warred like giants. Human passion, human terror were stilled in one second.

Are these things accident, or does Providence interfere

occasionally, to save the virtuous from the wicked, the feeble from the strong?

Who knows? There are mysteries which none can fathom, and Death though so greatly feared, often liberates where life chains.

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## CHAPTER XXXIX.

## A LIVING PRISONER.

BUT Andrine was not dead, although for a long, long while, she remained unconscious, and the world was as a blank.

When she, at length, in some degree, recovered her senses, the storm had spent itself, and everything was calm and still. The setting sun converted the Fjord into a shining sheet of amber glass. It decked the sky with royal colours, purple, gold, and crimson; and its departing rays shone down with a lingering tenderness upon Andrine's up-turned face, seeming to take a delight in its fair loveliness. Their warmth aroused her to sensation, and wooed her back to life.

By degrees as she issued more completely from the swoon which had made her lie there like one dead, she became aware of a crushing load upon her chest and ribs, that rendered breathing a positive pain, and prevented her lungs from inhaling the pure ozone as usual.

With a natural instinct to escape from what is hurtful, she endeavoured to rise, but found, to her dismay, that she was tightly pinned down by some heavy weight.

The discovery made her turn sick and faint. Once more, the same wild terror contracted her heart in an agonizing spasm, which had sent a death-like chill to it ere she fell.

She could remember that. She could remember how frightened she had been, and as her mind gradually grew clearer, she made a determined effort to recall the cause of her fright.

Was it the storm? She shuddered at the recollection of it, but she had seen many, and it was not that alone, which had roused her fears to such an intensity. She had been threatened by some other and more pressing danger, infinitely worse to bear.

"Ah!" and her white brows narrowed in a frown, she knew what that danger was. Mr. Smutch had tried to kiss her by force, and despite her hatred of him, a kind of horrible

glamour had begun to steal over her senses. She felt herself surrounded by an impure influence. And then had come that fearful crash, which caused him to start back, and, thank God! the wretch had failed to desecrate her lips by any touch of his.

Her memory was quite distinct now, and, in her agitation, she managed to raise her head about a couple of inches. A tremor seized her, and she quivered like an aspen leaf.

What was that horrible *thing*, with blackened face, drooping jaw, and purple lips, so near to her own—that ghastly thing, with the vacant eyes, and unearthly expression, which was pil-  
lowing itself upon her bosom, at the risk of suffocating her entirely?

A frenzy of sheer physical terror overcame her. She screamed aloud like a mad woman. The deadly weight kept her down, in spite of a supernatural strength given to her for a few brief minutes. She was a prisoner, but her hands!—Ah! thank God, her hands were free.

Hardly knowing what she did, she wound her slender fingers round the inanimate man's black hair and shook him with the energy of despair.

"Get up, get up," she cried, in terrified accents. "Surely you have tortured me enough for one day. What have I ever done to injure you—I, who only sought to keep out of your way? Oh! have mercy, else you will drive me wild."

Her cry of anguish mounted up into the still air, and floated far out on to the Fjord, but no sign of life changed the awful hue of that swollen and discoloured countenance, or came into the hideous, staring eyes. They magnetized her as they had done hitherto, seeming like an incarnate spirit of evil. With a groan she released her hold, and, immediately, the great, dark head fell heavy as a lump of lead upon her heaving bosom. As it did so, an icy fear stole through her veins, which annihilated courage and murdered reason. Once more her senses reeled, and, in the trance like state into which she now relapsed, she felt as if she were being dragged down to the very depths of Hades by some fiend disguised in the flesh of man, whose face and form resembled Mr. Smutch.

So, for a long time, she lay a prey to sharp, unconquerable fear; but, after a while, she commenced to struggle again, and to rebel against her cruel fate. In the course of a desperate effort, she ascertained that a huge rock, probably struck by lightning, had rolled down from above, and was sorely crushing Mr. Smutch. A few inches more to the right, and she,

not he, would have been the victim. His head and shoulders, and the upper portion of his body lay across her own, whilst quantities of smaller stones, which had evidently followed in the wake of the monster one, almost covered her skirt, and lay level with her face. She was as much a captive as if confined in an iron cell.

It took her some time to realize the full horror of her position. Mr. Smutch, if not dead already, was desperately badly wounded, and required immediate help. Besides which, it was growing very cold, and neither of them had a dry stitch on. Her anger against him faded as her apprehensions increased. The path was so little frequented that they might lie there all night without being discovered. This thought drove her frantic.

Meantime, the sun had totally disappeared, leaving long shafts of golden light in his wake, which turned to rose, and then to green, and, finally, to a deep purple. And, by-and-by, the yellow moon rose, round and stately, from behind the dark mountains, flooding the Fjord with her mystic beams, and turning half the valley into silver, and steeping the other half in blackest shade.

The solemn solitude, coupled with the loneliness and tragedy of the situation, filled Andrine with awe. She believed that, by the will of God, her last hour had come. If not quickly released she must die of suffocation, for to breathe became more and more difficult and painful.

She was naturally brave, but as the weary hours passed one by one, her spirit fainted within her. Again and again did she send shriek after shriek travelling up the valley, and the cruel echoes only mocked back at her, until the weird sounds grew hateful in her ears, and she sank into silence. She thought of Harry. Ah! if only he were here. A fierce longing seized her to see his face, to hear his voice once more before she died. Die! It was so hard to die. She could not go without letting him know how dearly she loved him. The imminent possibility of death made her cling passionately to life. Why had she hidden her love and fought with it, as if it were some shameful secret? She had been foolish. There was no sin in loving. She might so easily have told him that day when he had been near unto drowning, instead of suppressing every warm and tender feeling with obstinate tenacity. But now she had her reward, and she would never see him more. Her limbs would grow stiff and cold, her face would turn to marble,



horrible creeping things would destroy her body, and he would never know—never know. . . .

She began to wander a little and to find a difficulty in distinguishing between things real and things unreal. The fair moon glided higher, ever higher in the heavens, and the twilight deepened into the summer night, and one by one the beautiful shy stars came out, and looked with sorrowful contemplation on the prostrate pair. They seemed to pity her more than did the moon, Andrine thought. She was so placid and serene, but they glittered and faded, and glittered like creatures full of unrest. And now Andrine's strength failed. She was quite exhausted, and her cries for help grew feebler and feebler, recurring at longer intervals. A deadly stupor was beginning to steal over her. She tried to fight against it, but in vain. . . .

She was aroused by hearing a well-known voice call out: "Andrine, Andrine, where are you?"

All at once hope quickened the pulsations of her heart and made every nerve quiver.

Was it fancy?—the delusions common to dying folk, or did she really hear those sweet, familiar notes, which were dearer and more melodious than any upon earth?"

"Speak, Andrine, for God's sake, if you are still alive."

And this time she knew there was no mistake. He had come—come to save her.

"Harry," she cried with all the little strength left to her. "I am here."

There was a noise of quick footsteps displacing the loosely fallen stones, and in another second he was on his knees by her side, showering kiss after kiss upon her pale face. And even as he kissed it, he kissed back the warmth and the colour, and charmed away the lines of pain that during all those long hours had gathered thereon. Her eyes sought his in a loving glance, full of yearning and pathos, and without an interchange of words, he knew that the virgin snows of her nature had melted beneath Cupid's torch, and she was his own for ever.

That one rapturous moment which, laying their souls bare, swept away all doubts, all fears and reserve, recompensed them for what they had suffered.

For Harry also had endured a martyrdom.

On returning home—Jens having previously predicted a bad storm—he had been surprised to find Mr. Smutch absent.

He waited until supper-time, thinking his guest must have sought shelter in some cottage, and being very hungry, did not delay the meal for more than half-an-hour. But when eight o'clock, nine o'clock passed, then he began to grow seriously alarmed.

Could Ebor have packed up his things, and left by the steamer without imparting his intention? It was the only solution he could arrive at, and he called Herr Christian and made inquiries of him. But Herr Christian knew nothing save that Mr. Smutch had gone down to the landing-stage. When more closely questioned, he declared his luggage was still in his room.

Harry at once went to the little wooden pier at which the steamer put in. The storekeeper lived close by, and had the reputation of knowing everything that went on in the village. When applied to, he declared that Fröken Velsine was seen to go along the "Elsker Gang," shortly afterwards followed by Mr. Smutch. Andrine's name set Harry's blood aflame. What could she and Mr. Smutch be doing together? Accompanied by Jens, he started off there and then for The Lovers' Walk, but great as was his anxiety and torturing his suspicions, he little expected to find the girl in so sad a plight.

It needed all his and Jens' combined strength to roll the rock away which lay upon Mr. Smutch and crushed him. They freed him as gently as they could, but he never stirred during the process, and then they lifted Andrine from the wet ground, where she had lain so long. She could not stand without support. Harry put his arm round her waist. The reaction was too great, and, bursting into tears, she rested her head on his shoulder, like one so worn out by anguish as to be past all attempts at reserve.

"Oh, take me away! take me away!" she cried shudderingly. "That dreadful man wanted to kiss me; but I would not let him. It seemed like treason to you, and I would have died sooner."

"Never mind about all that just now," he said, seeing her agitated condition.

"I must mind. I can't help it. It resembles a horrible nightmare that clings to the memory. Oh, Harry! promise me one thing."

"What is it, my darling?"

"Never let me see Mr. Smutch again. You have no idea how strong and fierce he is." And she quivered in her lover's clasp like a timid little dove.

"Andrine," he said solemnly, "I fear Mr. Smutch was not a good man, but God has punished him, even in the very hour of his wickedness. He will never insult you again, for—he is dead."

She stole her two arms round his neck, and laid her fair young cheek to his.

"Harry," she whispered in awe-struck tones, with her great, grave eyes fixed upon those of the man she loved, "let us take warning—you and I. Let us try and be good, and do good all our lives. It is a such dreadful thing to learn so much wickedness of the world."

He folded her to his heart in a long and loving embrace.

"Dear one," he murmured, with the tears springing to his eyes, "you are right. We who live in the world, think a great deal too much of it, and insensibly grow mean, selfish and vicious. A very strong character is necessary to resist the evil influences brought together in a vast city. I have been bad too——"

"Not bad like Mr. Smutch," she interrupted hastily. "I would never believe that of you, even if you told me so with your own lips."

He thought of Annie Thompson, and the hot blood dyed his cheek, as he knew himself unworthy of her innocent trust.

"Andrine, I cannot deceive you. You think me better than I am. I have stood on the brink of a precipice, impelled there by my own weakness, and, instead of proving firm, yielded to temptation."

"Ah! but you did not fall," she exclaimed quickly. "That makes all the difference."

"Does it? I hope so, but I'm not so sure. However, from this day, I mean to turn over a new leaf. Your innocence and purity have roused nobler thoughts in me than I ever had before. God bless you, my beloved." And he smoothed back the white-gold hair from her brow.

She nestled close to him, and looked up into his face with clear, wide-open eyes, full of exquisite tenderness. The moon was shining down upon him, and lent a saintly radiance to his boyish features.

To her he was king, hero, God, all in one.

As their eyes met, a sudden wave of emotion swept over her being.

"Harry, my Harry!" she murmured with a half sob. "I am so happy. You may have faults—though I can't see them,

but my heart tells me you are good. I feel it and know it. You talk to me as if I were perfect, but I'm not. I only endeavour to do what is right, and to cling to high ideals rather than base ones. Everybody must be the better for that, and, if we help each other, then I am sure God will reward us some day."

A curious trumpeting made itself heard in their rear. They turned, and saw Jens blowing his nose behind a gaudy-coloured handkerchief.

And so, in the presence of the dead man, who sought to wrong the living, but whose sins were now expiated, Harry and Andrine plighted their troth.

The fair moon witnessed their betrothal, and smiled down approval, lighting the now tranquil Fjord with her opalescent rays, and crowning with a diadem of silver, the eternal snows which pierced the dark blue sky overhead.

## CHAPTER XL.

### HARRY BRINGS HOME HIS NORWEGIAN BRIDE.

AFTER the events recorded in the last chapter, Andrine was ill for a long time.

It was discovered that two of her ribs were broken, but even after her body had recovered, her mind still suffered from the terrible shock it had received.

The devoted attention of parents and lover at length restored her to health, although September was nearly at an end before she was really strong and well again.

Then Harry begged that they might be married as soon as possible, and although Herr Velsine pleaded Andrine's extreme youth, and talked of putting off the event until another year, the Doctor came to his aid, declaring that after the injury sustained by the girl, it would only be prudent to remove her to a warmer climate for the winter.

This opinion settled the question, and one day, towards the end of October, they all set off for Bergen, where Harry and Andrine were quietly married.

Shortly after the ceremony they crossed the North Sea, and established themselves in Bryanston Square, having first solemnly promised Herr and Frue Velsine that they would return in Spring.

Harry had previously issued instructions for his town house to be done up, and painted in light, airy colours after the Norwegian fashion, and he himself was delighted with the improvement effected in the dingy old residence. As for Andrine, she felt bewildered by the number of rooms, and the steepness and height of the stairs. It seemed to her as if she were transported into an entirely new world.

After the first novelty had worn off, she did not like London. It stifled her to look out of the window of a morning, and see nothing but grimy houses, stone pavements, iron railings, and miserable stunted trees, in place of her own beautiful Fjord, with its lofty mountains, clear running river, and dear familiar valley. This great town appeared so dark, so dirty, so cramped and narrow in comparison. There was nothing to look at; no wild flowers, no hills, no grass or foliage worthy of the name—nothing but men and women. And these latter irritated her. It filled her with shame and disgust to see them, as she constantly did, blocking up the path, congregated, like wasps round a treacle-pot, before every bonnet shop, haberdasher or milliner, which pandered to female vanity and frivolity.

But she kept most of these sentiments from Harry, knowing how inexperienced she was, and distrusting her own judgment. Her great object was not to vex him by her awkwardness and ignorance. And, after all, it signified very little whether she lived in a town or in the country. As long as they could be together, she asked for nothing more. Everything else was of no importance.

Harry soon discovered the advantages of having married a girl usefully educated. His household gave him no trouble, and at the same time was managed with the simplicity, comfort, and refinement he had so much admired in Frue Velsine's establishment.

Other mistresses came to him, and groaned over the iniquities of their servants.

Andrine's soon learnt to adore the kindly, wise young woman placed over their heads. And when, on one occasion, a drunken cook was discovered an hour before dinner, slumbering heavily on the kitchen table, and the other servants were all in too great a state of indignation, at the insult offered to their respectability to conceive of their employers being hungry, Andrine put on a white cap and apron, and without saying a word to anyone, went down into the kitchen and



cooked the dinner herself, thereby giving them a lesson which they never forgot.

Andrine was more than rewarded by Harry's declaring, with much satisfaction, that he had at last got a cook who could make real Norwegian "pandekages," when of course the secret came out.

And as he grew older, and got to know more of the world, his appreciation of his wife, and of her simple, sterling qualities, increased, until he fully realised how grateful he ought to be to Frue Velsine for having brought her daughter up in the good old-fashioned homely style, instead of in the wax dollie one, only meant to look at, and thoroughly unsuited to the stern realities of life.

When Mr. Bousfield's old bachelor friends first heard that Harry was bringing home a Scandinavian bride, they were horrified at the thought of a nasty, impudent, foreign woman having got hold of him, and declared, with a shake of the head, that, with his fortune and position, he ought to have done ever so much better.

But there we disagree.

For how can a man possibly do better than love a good, pure woman, and be loved by her in return? It is the best sort of happiness granted on this earth. Neither success, social prosperity, politics, nor that unstable thing called Fame, ever satisfy the yearnings implanted in the human heart, as does true love.

Needless to say, Andrine soon conquered the prejudices of Mr. Bousfield's friends. When she made them welcome to the house in her pretty, cordial manner, pressed them to come again, fed them well, and listened with admirable patience to their stories of bye-gone days, a tear would often steal to their old eyes, as they reflected what different people they might have been, had they had the luck to come across such a wife.

One word in conclusion.

The Sandéthal is now one of the best rivers in Norway. Every summer, Harry and Andrine go there, and partly through their personal popularity, partly through Herr Velsine's influence, they have succeeded in getting all the nets removed. Salmon traps are completely done away with, and having introduced a hatching apparatus, the river soon began to show some first-rate sport.

Jens, good, solid Jens flourishes, and divided his affections pretty equally between his master and mistress, until in process

of time, a little Fröken Andrine, as white and fair as her mother, made her appearance, when the giant fairly lost his great, soft heart.

And every year when the young couple return to the peaceful, secluded valley, some unknown hand invariably places sweet-smelling flowers on the plain, unpretending grave of the dead man buried in the rocky churchyard at the end of the "Elsker Gang."

Whose is the hand which thus testifies to a spirit of forgiveness the reader can doubtless guess.

About a year after his marriage, Harry read the following announcement in "The Times."

"On the 16th of October, the wife of Ebenezer Thompson, of a son, still-born."

And as his eye travelled downwards, he was shocked to see among the deaths.

"On the 20th of October, the wife of Ebenezer Thompson, aged twenty-one."

He gave a little sigh and a shudder, and for a long while sat very quiet.

"Poor thing! poor thing!" he murmured at length. "So she is dead. I have often wondered what became of her. Only twenty-one! She was very young to die, but perhaps it was for the best. She had hard lines, and with her warm, loving temperament, stood but little chance of being happy. Poor little Annie!"

And for days afterwards, Harry thought very kindly and sorrowfully of her memory, perhaps all the more so, because his own perfect domestic happiness made him sympathize with the cruel misery of hers.

He told Andrine of the event. He had no concealments from her, and as he gazed at his dear, true wife, tears of thankfulness stole to his eyes. God had been so good to them, that when he contrasted their lot with Annie Thompson's, he could not help feeling sorry for those who were less fortunate, and who had never known the bliss which they enjoyed. For in the stormy sea of matrimony he had had the rare luck to Land a Prize.

THE END.

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